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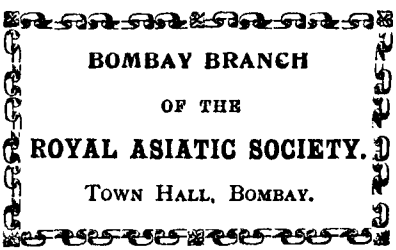

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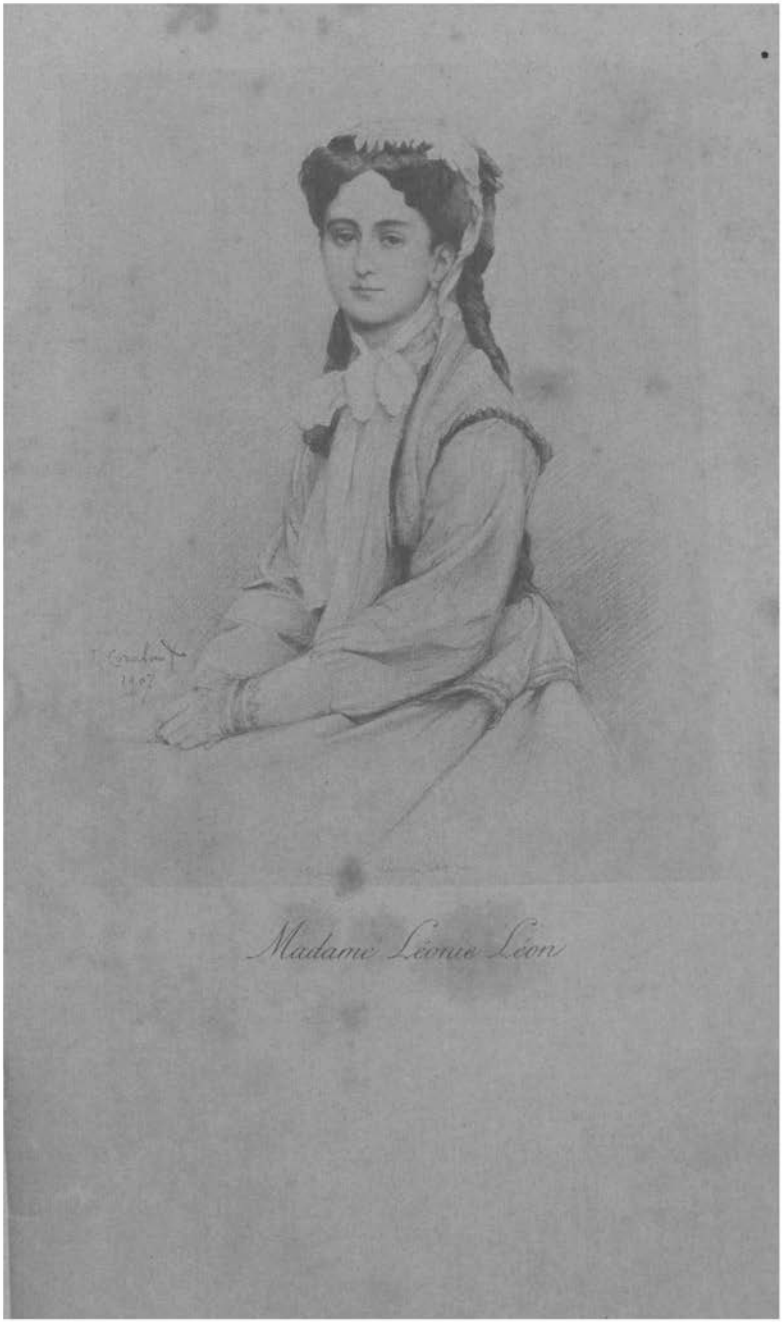

Madame Léonie Léon

THE HEART OF GAMBETTA

BY FRANCIS LAUR

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION BY VIOLETTE M. MONTAGU

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JOHN MACDONALD

WITH A PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECE AND FIVE OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

M. FRANCIS LAUR, author and compiler of this volume, was one of Gambetta's most trusted lieutenants in the Organisation of the National Defence—the astonishing achievement of the one man who after Sedan and Metz did not "despair of the Republic."

One of a family wherein the scientific bent, no less than the republican spirit, was hereditary —the Revolutionary Calendar was the work of an astronomical ancestor of his—young Laur distinguished himself in the engineering school of St. Quentin. It was Georges Sand whose *protégé* the fatherless boy had the good luck to be, who chose his profession for him.

He was in Algeria, a young man of twenty-six, occupying a responsible post in the engineering department, when the Republic was proclaimed from the Hotel de Ville. He at once organised a force of volunteer artillery, and assisted in the muster and despatch of a larger contingent.

Invited home by Gambetta, M. Laur was

appointed a Special Commissioner for military organisation, and Commandant of Engineers with the Army of the East. The equipment, with guns and ammunition, of hurried levies for the border was in a great measure due to his resource and his incessant activity.

As Deputy for a Paris division, he became a Boulangist, because, at a critical time, the General gave proofs of great ability and energy in strengthening the frontier: he ceased to be one the moment the reactionary possibilities of Boulangism revealed themselves. "The Republic," said M. Laur, in my talk with him lately, "owes General Boulanger a historic mot worthy of my glorious chief Gambetta himself." The General's words were, "I should be a fool if I meant war, and a criminal did I not prepare against it."

The letters in this volume, beginning in February, 1873, and ending in September, 1882, shortly before Gambetta's death, first appeared in the *Revue de Paris* less than a year ago. There were about a hundred of them. But if, during the ten years of their ideally beautiful union, Gambetta wrote to Léonie "every day"—as M. Joseph Reinach, Gambetta's confidant and private secretary says he did—there must be a great many more hundreds still extant. "Every day," because, with the exception of their holiday excursions to Germany, Italy, and elsewhere, their meetings in Paris and at Ville d'Avray,

Gambetta and Léonie but very rarely saw each other. M. Laur narrates how scrupulously they guarded their intimacy from the world's intrusion, and even from the observation of Gambetta's closest associates, so that very few of these ever came to know Léonie personally. M. Laur was one of the few.

M. Laur, Gambetta's disciple and worshipper, recognises in Léonie a mind of a high order and a character as elevated and noble, as heroic, as Gambetta's own. He has written the apotheosis of the gifted, beautiful woman who in the later years of her life-long grief was all but forgotten, the pathos of whose obscure death and burial in a Paris suburb eleven months ago will be felt in M. Laur's narrative.

"Many of my Gambettist comrades," M. Laur tells me, "are indignant with me for ascribing to Léonie such commanding influence upon the Great Tribune at every important step of his career. They will brook no such participation in Gambetta's glory. The language of Gambetta's own letters they interpret as the natural—and in his case meridional—extravagance of an exceptionally eloquent and adoring lover. They are mistaken. Strange that the ancient prejudice of the superior male against women is not yet extinct even among good republicans! To take the most striking instance of Léonie's influence—she it was who converted

him to the project of an interview with Bismarck. He was against it. She pushed him on. He kept saying no. At last he obeyed. . . . In the wrangling of parties and the intrigues of pretended friends Léonie saved him from despondency, and from the outbursts of wrath to which his impetuous nature rendered him liable. She managed him in small things also. She tamed his brusque manners of the Bohemian Latin Quarter. She smoothed off his rough edges. She polished him, made him presentable in the most fastidious society."

Mademoiselle Léonie Léon did all that. She polished her rough diamond with the skill of an Amsterdam artist. But Léonie had a gem of the first water to operate upon.

Some interesting corroboration of the splendid young lion's ways before Léonie took him in hand, and after, is given in a short series of letters lately published at Bordeaux under the title of "Gambetta Inconnu: Cinq mois de la Vie intime de Gambetta." The letters are Gambetta's own, to his friend André Lavertujon, who, like M. Laur, filled a responsible post in the Government of National Defence, and reveres the great patriot's memory. M. Lavertujon remarks that correction was "much to be desired" in his illustrious friend's speech, gestures, habits, tricks — the spitting trick, for instance. These faults "displeased many people."

"They annoyed me, rather," he admits. But he goes on to say that the sinner was so warm-hearted, so affectionate, so irresistible, that "one forgot everything."

The few letters to M. Lavertujon (taken from a large number in the venerable scholar's possession) were written in the second half of 1869, nearly four years before the beginning of an ideally perfect union, which was a marriage in every sense short of ratification by an office clerk and a priest's benediction.

But upon the interesting topic of Léonie Léon's influence over Gambetta the statesman, no less than upon Gambetta the lover, further light will be cast in the three-volume History of the Third Republic, which M. Laur is finishing, which will be issued next year, and in the composition of which he has used a large portion of the unpublished correspondence in his private possession. It may be observed here that M. Laur's acount of the character and extent of that influence appears to be, at least to a large extent, confirmed by M. Reinach, who in a recent communication to the *Temps* said that Gambetta "always consulted" Léonie, and that her advice was often "decisive." M. Joseph Reinach knew Léonie well. He was one of her most helpful friends in the twenty-five years of her sorrow. One good service at least M. Laur's book will render to the memory of Léonie and Gambetta.

It will dissipate, for ever, the vulgar legend—of jealousy, a quarrel, and the (authentic) pistol-shot—based on the gossip of village cafés, by one of the worst pests of the hysterical epoch, the prowling reporter.

It was not from the *Revue de Paris* that the French public derived its first knowledge of a correspondence which, even judged by the necessarily restricted instalment of it now issued, will be recognised as the most beautiful of its kind in print; it was, curiously enough, from the Chamber of Deputies—from a speech by M. Jean Jaurès, at the uneasy time when Delcassé's "anti-German" policy was in debate, and the rattle of the Kaiser's scabbard was audible in the din of the Morocco crisis. But no one knew that the passages on the mysterious relations between Gambetta and Bismarck in 1878, described by the Socialist orator as Gambetta's "private Notes," and now read out by him as a proof of the "Great Tribune's" desire for friendship with the victors of Sedan—no one knew that these so-called "Notes" were extracts from their author's love-letters to Léonie Léon.

To hear M. Jean Jaurès claim Gambetta as an ally—and that with a plausibility somewhat disconcerting to the deputies who still dreamt of "revanche"—the Gambetta who in those same "Notes" called Bismarck "a monster," "an ogre," was to realise the fact that there had arisen a

new *couche sociale* of temper more revolutionary than the *nouvelles couches* which in 1869 sent Léon Gambetta to the Palais Bourbon. The atmosphere of the place had changed since Gambetta himself stood on the spot whence the Socialist orator was reciting the "Notes" to Léonie—since Léonie, the graceful beauty of twenty-one, yet a stranger to the object of her admiration, was wont, from her front seat in the crowded public galleries, to follow every utterance of the young giant on the tribune, the new-comer from democratic Belleville, the most eloquent Frenchman, and the most magnetic, since Mirabeau.

"She did not applaud," writes M. Laur. And again, "their eyes met." The story describing Gambetta's descending from the tribune, scribbling a note, giving it to the usher for delivery to the young lady in the black gloves, may surprise those of M. Laur's English readers who know the House of Commons, and do not the Palais Bourbon. Imagine a young lady in the British House applauding an orator. M. Laur's story is an illustration, not merely of difference in customary etiquette between the two Houses, but of the spirit and genius of the French one, and even of the national character. It is one of the incidents which, trivial in themselves, exemplify Mr. Bodley's proposition that the French are "not a parliamentary people."

Introduction

The French House may be compared to a theatre, with the public in the two tiers of galleries, the Deputies in the pit, the orator on the stage, and seated aloft behind him, in his gilded chair, the stage manager—the President of the Chamber, who bears a certain functional resemblance to the English Speaker, but whose principal occupation is to remonstrate, entreat, scold, ring a bell violently when the gentlemen in the pit grow uproarious.

On great days, when half the audience in the public galleries is composed of fashionably attired ladies, and the champions of debate are "on," the scene is as brilliant as most first nights, and much more stirring. The orator's mere position, facing friend and foe, addressing them directly, and not "Mr. Speaker," generates an emotional interplay of a kind unfamiliar to St. Stephen's, sharpens his wits, fits in with the histrionic bent of the race. Nobody is shocked when the public galleries applaud, when the flutter of laced handkerchiefs or wave of gloved hands rewards some deft hit, some moving period.

So the new-comer, Gambetta, already famous, was stirred when in the course of his speech his eyes met Léonie's steady, appreciative gaze. According to M. Laur, this little scene took place in 1869, the year of Gambetta's election to the Corps Legislatif; so that four years passed before the accidental meeting at a friend's house, followed

by the interview in the garden of Versailles. According to M. Reinach, it took place in 1870. The discrepancy may be worth a passing reference. As regards the other details, Gambetta's two friends are in agreement.

These letters—again to quote M. Laur's words in my conversation with him—"reveal, for the first time, the fact, which only one or two even among their closest friends but dimly surmised—that the sovereign of Gambetta's heart was often the illuminer of his mind, his partner in every decisive resolution of his strenuous career." The writer of the letters, and the statesman whose ambition was the moral and intellectual education of the people, through the instrumentality of the Republic, for the reign of Right guarded by Might—the lover and the statesman were one and the same. Gambetta meant what he said when, in his letters, he called Léonie "a great politician," his "Minerva," his "guardian genius," his "counseller ever steadfast and penetrating," a Madonna to whom he would dedicate a tablet (*ex voto*), "the light of his reason," "the inspirer of his best achievements," "his teacher;" and when he writes "*ora pro nobis*," as if he were a good Catholic praying to a saint. Gambetta's love is an ever-present, refining, elevating influence, pervading the whole man; a thing as sacred to him as to a Christian his religion; his viaticum through life's pilgrim-

age. It is the passion of a great, romantic, sensitive, loyal, generous nature, expressed from first to last in language fragrant with the fine flower of chivalry, and deepening in devotion with the fleeting years.

Why did Gambetta desire the interview with Bismarck?

Not in the hope, said the reader of the "Notes" in the discussion already referred to, that he could induce the "Monster," the "Ogre," to restore the lost provinces. The hope would have been "chimerical," though the annexation was, as the Socialist orator frankly described it, a crime against civilisation. Gambetta, continued the orator, hoped for "reparation" of some sort. "I do not know what form the reparation may ultimately take. But these 'Notes' of Gambetta's prove that it was his policy to obtain it through a *détente* with Germany, a *rapprochement* with Germany—a policy of conciliation, of pacification (*apaisement*) with Germany; through the final recognition that there exist natural rights inviolable by brute force." Count Bülow, after his recent interview with M. Etienne, Gambetta's friend and colleague and inheritor of his ideas, in a newspaper interview meant for European edification, spoke most pleasantly of the *détente* which some day, with discreet cultivation, might grow into an *entente*. Let me give one or two typical indications of a change which is gradually taking place

in the French mind respecting the question that dominated Gambetta's thoughts. The Marguerittes, representative men, write that the people of Alsace Lorraine have for ever abandoned the idea of "reparation" by war, that they would be content with the erection of the country into a home-ruling, separate State of the Empire—like Baden, or Würtemberg. Pierre Baudin takes the same view, says that the "lost provinces" are growing prosperous and reconciled to their fate; that, as a self-governing State within the Empire, Alsace Lorraine would become what she once was, "a bridge" between Germany and France, instead of continuing to be "the barrier" she has been since the war. Finally, every Frenchman holds that even in the event of a war from which the Republic should emerge victorious, the people of Alsace Lorraine should be left to decide by their own free vote whether to remain within the Empire, or return to the Republic—"reparation" by mere force being regarded as a repetition of the "very crime" attributed to the "spoilers" of 1871.

In a communication to the *Temps*, M. Joseph Reinach said that the foregoing interpretation of Gambetta's idea of an interview with Bismarck was "absolutely correct." He added that Gambetta's excuse for abandoning it, though a good one, was only a pretext, for, otherwise, the project would afterwards have been renewed.

"Gambetta's own words to me were, 'I had no mind to come back with empty hands.' Gambetta had hoped to return, not with empty hands. When he felt convinced that nothing but disadvantage was likely to result from an interview which would not be kept secret, he broke off the negotiations and remained in Paris. Gambetta's belief was that the Alsace-Lorraine question was open to a pacific solution. In his famous speech at Cherbourg he had said that from the sentiment of Justice alone the great reparation due might arise. But recent history had proved to him that the Right needs the aid of Might. And so the strengthening of the military force of France was the ever-present subject of his thoughts."

It is a question of Gambetta's state of mind—of the "orientation" of his ideas during the years following the disaster, amidst the changing conditions of international relations. We have an indication of it in his reply to the Alsatian deputation of 1872. "Revanche" was not mentioned. "Our duty," said Gambetta, "is to prove to Europe that we have no other purpose than to raise ourselves—however long a time the process may last—to that position of moral and material strength wherein it will be needless to draw the sword; wherein Right will receive the satisfaction due to it because behind it is our Might." Four years later Gambetta was addressing the people of Lille. "Considering the European situation,"

said he, "and it being my heart's one longing to renew the strength of our Fatherland, I look forward to a day when, by the general ascendancy of the idea of Justice, our lost brethren will be restored to us, and the stability of Europe permanently secured."

But what is this if not an adaptation of the Cromwellian trust in God and dry powder? For a "pacificist," Cromwell performed some notable feats on the battlefield. And the Foreign Offices of Europe represented at the Hague—whether the populations themselves are so or not—acclaim the moral element, preach the *detente* and the *entente* and the *rapprochement*, and then spurt off splendidly in the race for armaments.

Another indication of the Great Tribune's state of mind, before his tardy consent to an interview with Bismarck, is given in the *Nuova Antologia's* record of a visit paid by Crispi to Gambetta late in 1877. Gambetta broached the idea of disarmament. He asked Crispi to suggest it to Bismarck. Which the Italian statesman did, soon after, in person. The "Monster's" treatment of the suggestion may easily be guessed. The incident proved Gambetta's desire for a friendly compact of some kind between France and Germany. But it did not prove that Gambetta was resigning himself to the prospect of a lasting separation from "our lost brethren."

Introduction

Reunion with our "lost brethren" was Gambetta's unalterable dream. The goal was star-clear; the path vague as night. Some disturbance of the European equilibrium might throw it open. And so the Opportunist thought he detected, in Bismarck's speech in the Reichstag, the dawn of a coming day of justice. One may feel surprised at Gambetta's enthusiasm over such guarded allusions of Bismarck's as are mentioned in the letters to Léonie. It may be said, in explanation, that in his sanguine, impulsive way, Gambetta interpreted the Reichstag speech in the roseate light of his fixed idea of pacific "reparation" through some favouring change in European politics. If the victors of Sadowa, to avoid an "irreparable breach" with Austria, had refrained from annexing Austrian territory, might not a like reflection induce the victors of Sedan to reconsider the Alsatian question, particularly as, through Gambetta's own efforts, the French Army was rapidly recovering from its tremendous defeat?

Having made up his mind to visit Bismarck, why did Gambetta so suddenly change his mind? It was not as if there had been no encouragement from the other side. The German go-between, Count Henckel-Donnersmark, was in constant excitation over the project. On April 6, 1878, he wrote to Gambetta. There was no reply

Six days later he informed Bismarck that Gambetta was nowhere to be found. On the 22nd, Gambetta wrote to the Count, explaining that his long silence had been caused by his absence at the death-bed of a near and dear relative, and asking to see him on the following day, the 23rd. They met, and talked. On the same day the count telegraphed to Bismarck that Gambetta would leave on Sunday the 28th, and reach Berlin on Monday the 29th. It was on the evening of the 23rd that Gambetta wrote to Léonie—"I have seen him (the Count). I have agreed. The Monster returns (to Berlin, from Friedrichsruhe) to receive me." By next day, the 24th, Gambetta abandoned the project, and excused himself on the ground of the imminent re-assembling of the Chamber.

An interesting letter on this curious episode was lately published by M. Edmond Caze, deputy for la Haute Garonne, one of Gambetta's intimate friends. Early on April 24, writes M. Caze, Gambetta "sent me a message, asking me to go with him for a drive in the Bois. When we had reached a secluded alley in the park, Gambetta, as if he had been reserving himself for the quiet of the spot, stopped abruptly in his familiar talk.

"Said he, 'Let us suppose ourselves at a Ministerial Council. I invite my colleagues' opinion on this matter: An interview with

Bismarck has been proposed to me. Ought I to go? What do you think?'

"I remained for a while in mute astonishment. Gambetta, silently, inscrutably, waited for my reply. Having conscientiously turned the matter over in my mind, I answered that any such interview must prove prejudicial to his influence over the people of Alsace Lorraine. I also expressed my fear of the shock it might inflict upon the *morale* of the Army. And so I said, 'In my opinion, you ought not to go.'

"'It is mine too,' replied Gambetta. 'I shall not go.'

"Without another word, he told the coachman to turn homewards. We went into the office of 'La Republique Française,' where Gambetta had his working-room. In my presence he wrote to the address of M. le Comte Henckel-Donnersmark the letter announcing his inability to accept the invitation. He directed me to post the letter, which I forthwith did."

M. Caze did not know, nor did Gambetta tell him, that only a few hours earlier he had agreed to start for Berlin! Gambetta had spoken about the futility of a trip ending in a return with "empty hands." But if he meant a definite bargain about Alsace Lorraine, he might have predicted the futility from the beginning. He could not have expected to bring back with him from Varzin, as a token of the "Ogre's"

contrition, the little table whereupon was signed the treaty of Frankfort, upon which Léonie and Gambetta, in one of their German excursions, had gazed—Gambetta declaring that he could not rest content until the little table should be restored to its old place in the palace of Versailles.

This instability of purpose, inconsistent with the character of the man, is explicable on the supposition (mentioned in an earlier part of this sketch) that the project of an interview was not Gambetta's, that it was urged upon him by his adored Léonie, and that he yielded against his own judgment. The letters contain evidence of Léonie's insistence and Gambetta's hesitations. Gambetta's mood was that of a perplexed person at the mercy of the last plausible talker. M. Caze's advice restored to his friend the courage of his individual opinion. On the spur of the moment, the final refusal was written and posted; and the "accomplished fact" fortified Gambetta for his next meeting with Léonie.

M. Laur tells me that in his forthcoming history he will throw fresh light upon Gambetta's ambition respecting the "lost provinces." Gambetta himself, he says, "regretted, in his last years, his having given too absolute a character to his own injunction—never to speak of Alsace-Lorraine: only not to forget."

"Occasions may come when we must speak, and this is one," exclaimed M. Georges Clemenceau,

in the debate over the expulsion of the Alsatian priest, M. Delsor, from French territory. M. Delsor was expelled on the ground that he had come to France as a clerical agitator. But though a German subject, M. Delsor was a native of the lost provinces. That was enough for the "revanche" Deputies. "Our separated brethren will now come to the conclusion that the France they love has for ever abandoned them." On the other hand, the "pacificists" of the extreme Left, though they characterised the annexation as a crime against civilisation, repudiated the faintest suggestion of a conflict for the undoing of the Frankfort Treaty; the severance must be put up with, and made the best of: the Alsatians are gradually adjusting themselves to their new environment: let Time, the arch-diplomatist, heal the old wound, and make an end of the Alsatian question, as he has cured the Waterloo sore.

It was then that M. Clemenceau made his grave protest: "There are occasions when we must speak. . . . The honourable M. de Pressensé is mistaken if he imagines that his views are those of the French people. I, too, am for peace—but I do not acquiesce in his method of securing it."

It was a trivial incident, the Delsor affair; but it was the source of one of the two febrile excitations, over the forbidden theme, which the

Chamber has witnessed within the last few years. The spectacle might have suggested to an onlooker the image of France stirring uneasily in her sleep. The Heart of Gambetta—its beat was perceptible through all the murmur, irritation, impatience, flow of retrospective, prospective allusion, regretful reminiscence, tentative hope.

And but a few days ago at Amiens, M. Georges Clemenceau, who now fills the office from which he deposed Gambetta twenty-five years ago, extols, for timely warning and inspiration, in one of the most eloquent speeches he has ever delivered, Gambetta's ideal of the State—a Republic without class wars; unifying all interests; perfecting her army, not for aggression, but as a school of citizenship, of moral discipline, no less than as an instrument of force: a "Moral and intellectual Personality," strengthened to the highest degree of Might for Right's sake.

"TA CARRIÈRE, C'EST LA PATRIE"

said, to young Léon Gambetta, his peasant mother. A magnificent farewell, such as might have been uttered on the banks of the Eurotas, or by a Roman matron in the austere heroic days of the Republic. It was her son's watch-word throughout his career. It imparts to his Letters to Léonie one of their essential charms. It is the text of M. Clemenceau's national manifesto at Amiens: and of ex-President

Loubet's address, and of the ministerial speeches, in Cavaillon, at the dedication of Charpentier's statue of the man whom the leader of the French Socialists has called "our incomparable patriot," whom the orators of Cavaillon and Amiens have eulogised as "the incarnation of the French mind," as the "ideal Republican whose aspirations we inherit." Often will it be heard as the conflict grows between the two ideals—the ideal of the armed Republic, and the ideal of the "pacificist" revolutionaries, who might, as in effect they do, adopt as their answering challenge, "Ta carrière, c'est l'humanite."

The "Gambetta cult" revives, as the "anti-militarists," "anti-patriotics," "Hervéists," "humanitarian internationalists," "Socialists *sans patrie*," as they are variously denounced, grow stronger, or only, as the scorners allege, louder and more audacious. But strive against each other as they may, the idealists of "Fatherland" and the idealists of "Humanity"—not only in France but throughout Europe—are at one and the same task—liberating the race from the encumbrance of the systems and the creeds—religious, economic, social—that have done their work: preparing for it, its new "religio," its bond of union, to last throughout the next stage of its development.

JOHN MACDONALD.

PARIS,
October 14, 1907.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

THE publisher has much pleasure in acknowledging his indebtedness to Professor A. Legros for permission to reproduce the etching of Gambetta, and the remarkable death-mask.

It has been thought advisable, as conveying more pronouncedly the spirit of the French original, to retain in the correspondence the *tutoiement* of Gambetta, and in the narrative portion the historic present of M. Laur.

PREFACE

AT LES JARDIES

REINACH is delivering one of his most eloquent discourses on Gambetta, surrounded by an attentive circle of listeners who fill the wainscoted room where the great man drew his last breath; one of his audience, hidden behind a window, weeps in silence. The tears fall fast on a moustache which is growing grizzled.

In a moment of veritable eloquence Reinach, calling his audience to witness to the grandeur of him who was once the very incarnation of France and patriotism, perceives the listener sobbing quietly in a corner.

He recognises me, for it is I; and it seems to me that he is pleased to see his efforts appreciated.

I weep because, as I listen to Reinach, I fancy I can see Gambetta fighting for his country and for the Republic, the great politician never

doubting France's strength, the orator's noble soul, and beyond all this I can see his heart, that affectionate heart known to so few, shrouded in a mystery which hitherto no one has been able to penetrate. I see again in this house, Les Jardies, the tender meetings of two beings who loved and suffered.

And—I remember well this scene as described by another author—Gambetta is there, stretched out on his deathbed, in this very room where I am weeping, already buried under flags and blossoms, and surrounded by his political supporters. He rests peacefully, his long grey hair brushed back from his forehead as in his lifetime. Suddenly a tall woman, still beautiful, appears, crosses the room, goes straight up to Gambetta, pauses for a moment, and slowly, without a tear, with fixed gaze, presses a last kiss on the dead man's broad forehead.

With a ghostlike, automatic step the unknown lady disappears, and no one can tell her name or give a clue to her identity.

She was never seen again.

And yet this woman has shared Gambetta's life. She is there when the young orator makes his brilliant *début* in the tribune of the Corps législatif; she assists at all the great events in

his life, and the union of their two minds is complete and perfect. *He writes to her every day!* She inspires him, she cheers him, she loves him in silence, passionately. She never allows her personality to hamper his public life; *she is more ambitious of fame and glory for him than he is for himself.* In a word, she is even better than a wife; she is the friend of his intellect as well as the companion of his heart.

And all this wonderful hidden life, wonderful for its intellectual activity, full of devotion, love, and passion—this perfect life with the greatest man of the day—ends in a cold, silent kiss given before a crowd of officials.

And this is what I see once more at Les Jardies, while Reinach calls up so many mighty memories. Here, forgetful of the surging crowd around me, alone with the remembrance of Gambetta and of her who was his lifelong confidante, in this room where he lived, loved, and died, I determine to tell the story of the heart of Gambetta, of that heart still unknown, though his life as a patriot, his oratorical fame, and his wonderful political gifts are known universally and already belong to history. It matters little to my readers how I came to write the following lines. Gambetta always trusted in me. When in 1870 he

descended in his balloon at Tours, at his request I left Algeria while still a youth and came to place myself under his command. He appointed me, together with Carnot and Olivier de Serres, commissioner for the organisation of National Defence. He taught me to detest the Germany of Bismarck, but not the Germany of Goethe, and to love France above all things. He was my master, my leader, my counsellor, I owe him all the success of my life.

In writing this I pay a personal debt and I fulfil the duty of a Frenchman.

FRANCIS LAUR.

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à la Lumière de mes yeux, à l'Etoile de ma vie

Léon Léon

Sempre! Sempre!

Léon Lumbroso

THE CORPS LÉGISLATIF IN 1869

THE HEART OF GAMBETTA

I

THE CORPS LÉGISLATIF IN 1869

GAMBETTA is standing in the rostrum of the Corps Législatif; he repeats with emphasis this phrase addressed to his Belleville constituents :[1]

"Yes, I have said it. By my opinions, by my political actions I wish to secure the supremacy of the people, a supremacy organised in a rational and perfect manner. Being a radical democrat, passionately devoted to the ideals of liberty and fraternity, I shall, in all political discussions, make it my aim to restore and establish, in opposition to the democracy of a Julius Cæsar, the

[1] It has been said in the Press that in 1869 the orators of the Corps Législatif spoke from their own seats. This is a mistake. In 1852 the rostrum was suppressed, but in 1869 it had already been reinstated for several years.

doctrine, rights, vindications, and even the inconsistencies of a thorough democracy." And with one of his well-known gestures, he sweeps the rostrum where he has reigned for so many years.

In front of him, in one of the side tribunes, a tall black-gloved woman, beautiful, though of rather a severe type of beauty, like a Roman woman who somehow had wandered to Paris, gazes at him long and fixedly.

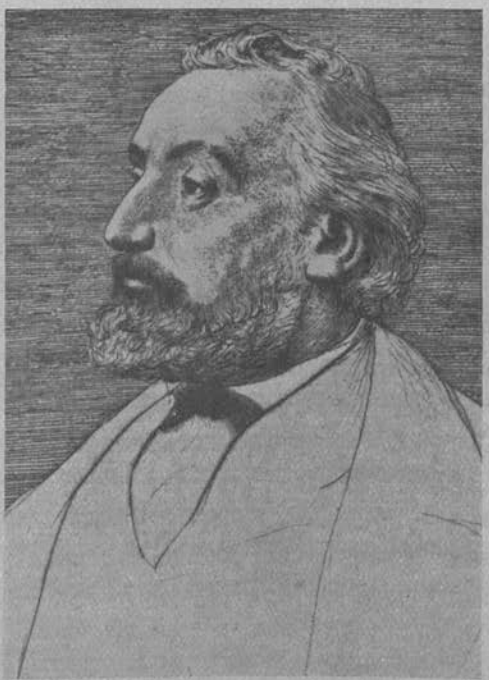
For several months whenever he has spoken she has been present; she never lets anything betray her feelings, she never applauds; no matter the incidents, nothing in her manner appears to approve or to disapprove; she gazes; she fixes her eyes on, and fascinates, the one object which absorbs her whole mind: Gambetta.

I can still see him, his strong face, his huge forehead, his enthusiasm, his big voice, his impetuous youth, and that proud toss of the head to throw back his hair which made him so strangely like a lion at liberty.

Their eyes often meet, his full of ardent questions, the unknown woman's replying with an expression of calm enigma.

Has he ever loved?

In the Latin quarter which he fills with his voice, with his gestures, where he completed his literary, historical, economic and military studies to the admiration of many an old statesman, no one has ever known him to have any serious



GAMBETTA

From an Etching by Professor A. Legros, by whose permission the reproduction has been made

love-affair. Though by no means wanting in audacity, his knowledge of the fair sex is not very great.

One day she is there, more beautiful and more enigmatical than ever; he descends from the rostrum, goes to a table, hastily scribbles a note, puts it into an envelope, points out the black-gloved lady to one of the officials, and then awaits his fate with his gaze fixed on the tribune.

He sees the letter handed to her. She opens the envelope slowly, she reads the letter standing, then quietly—she tears it up and disappears.

AT THE ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE

II

AT THE ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE

THE war is over, France has been defeated, but Gambetta is still to the front. He has saved her honour, he has proved himself to be his country's most zealous patriot. He has ungrudgingly spent his whole life in her service; he has been elected by nine departments; he has signed the passionate protest against the treaty which gave our Alsace and Lorraine to the enemy. He is the very incarnation of patriotic love.

The whole world admires his reputation, his genius and his strength.

In the Assemblée Nationale he continues to fulfil his self-imposed task: to prepare his country's restoration by remodelling the nation's civic and military education, and by making the republican party the ruling party.

He is there, in the rostrum, combating Rivet's scheme to alter the Assemblée Nationale and make it an Assemblée Constituante; addressing his friends, the members of the Union Républicaine, he says:

"Notwithstanding the usurpation, let us not hesitate; never neglect an opportunity to bring your stone to the upbuilding of national regeneration." And his gaze wanders over the benches of the Assemblée Nationale where the members are seated who later are to form the 363.

Suddenly he, who is usually so completely master of his feelings, starts.

He has found her again.

She is there, quite close to him, still wearing her black gloves, still beautiful, still mysterious, but the expression in her eyes is softer, even tearful at times; she almost smiles.

Gambetta feels this; he knows he has made some impression on this proud nature, so obstinately reserved.

A moment later he has written to her, sent her a distracted appeal: "At last I see you once more. Is it really you?"

The same scene is enacted as at the Corps Législatif, and his heart beats. . . .

Alas! the same result, but with a difference: she does not tear up the letter, but slips it into her bodice.

Is that an encouragement? Is it a farewell? Again she disappears.

The months pass by. He will not see her again, and only chance—Providence she will call it—will bring them together once more.

IN THE HOME OF A WOUNDED FRIEND

III

IN THE HOME OF A WOUNDED FRIEND

THE unknown lady does not appear again at Versailles. But the obsession is mutual. A wonderful change is slowly taking place in their hearts; the fixed idea is to meet, to meet again. But where? How?

Gambetta is thirty-four years of age. As I have already said, his life has altogether been a loveless one in the elevated sense of the word. He has never had time to love. Ever since his majority, he has had to be on the look-out, like a soldier on the ramparts. But for four years now he has carried in his heart the sweet, serious image of this woman who, though she refuses his advances, never forgets him.

Who is she? Is she a vulgar adventuress? Oh, no, never that! Her very appearance and manner deny the idea. Is she one of those stray sheep of society who throw themselves at the head of a celebrity in the hope that they may

acquire reflected glory by so doing? No, certainly not. Four years ago she tore up his first audacious letter. . . . But she kept the second!

What does this mystery mean?

The human heart is strangely influenced by doubt and mystery.

Can she be an *ingénue*, a child with a longing for a romantic adventure?

And still he continues to wonder!

She is apparently a woman of five and twenty, in the very prime of her beauty and intelligence. Yes, that is it—a woman, mistress of her own fate. A widow perhaps? Ah! what does it matter? She is an accomplished woman, aware of her own charm; a woman who thinks, I am sure, who reflects, who perhaps feels herself drawn towards an irresistible magnet; but who, fearing to succumb, struggles and flees.

For who is more irresistible than this great, ready-witted man, master of himself and of others even in his moments of greatest impetuosity? His mind is cultivated, and his mother Orasie, the descendant of an old and cultured French family, his mother, who until now has been the sole object of his deep affection, desired that his education might be as complete and varied as possible. His is not a one-sided genius, always absorbed by the same idea, struggling patiently for the same object and at last winning fame and glory.

In the Home of a Wounded Friend

He is an artist, an orator; he is a strategist, a philosopher, a writer (though at that time no one knew it); he is an historian, a diplomatist; it would be strange if he were not an irresistible lover. He is the best all-round man of his time. Therefore M. Thiers, who for fifty years had seen pass before him all the Frenchmen of any worth, gives his sympathy, his affection even to him whom the reactionists called in his presence the "furious fool." Yes, it is Gambetta's personality, his determined moderation, his charm —the term is not too strong—which won M. Thiers over to the Republic and gave France a permanent form of government such as she had not known for more than a century. Let us never forget that.

How could a woman who had been persistently remarked by him for several years resist a charm so powerful and universal?

They were both at the mercy of a chance meeting and of an unexpected event.

One day Gambetta hears that a companion of his childhood has been wounded out hunting. Gambetta is good-hearted, a true friend. One afternoon he leaves home on foot to take a stroll. He goes to call on his friend's mother, who is "at Home" that day. Other friends have come like himself to get news of the wounded man, and the salon is full of visitors talking over the events of the day.

Is it possible? She is there among the visitors! He advances slowly, trembling, he, the man who proclaimed Bazaine's treachery. His first words to her are a few commonplace phrases. But their gaze meets, and each reads in the other's eyes the confession of a mutual love.

They love even before they speak to each other.

When at last they are in the street together, he questions her eagerly.

"Why did you tear up my letters? Did you not feel I was in earnest? Why have you been so silent all these years when you knew that I loved you?"

And suddenly, like a brave, loyal, honest woman, she begins her pitiful confession.

"No, you cannot love me! I am unworthy of your great destiny! *I am one of those women whom nobody marries!* I am unhappy . . . partly by my own fault and partly by the fault of circumstances. I will not hear of your love until I have told you the story of my sad life. Don't speak, I beg; make no promises; keep your heart; keep your heart still in your own possession; let us say good-bye."

She wishes to leave him.

He detains her. He no longer begs, but gently commands.

"I must see you again. Where? Tell me now, and I will be there."

"No! No one must know that you are mixed up in a sordid adventure. I won't see you at my home. Your friends and enemies know everything you do. I will never consent to come to your house. Your sister, your family, no one must know of my existence. I value your reputation more than you value it yourself. Don't ask me to do impossible things. Let us part."

Calmly he replies, "No; I understand you. You want our friendship to be absolutely unknown to every one. Very well, I consent. Come to the park of Versailles Wednesday next. There are quiet spots there. Come, I beg you."

The agreement is ratified by a pressure from her ungloved hand, on which he imprints a furtive kiss.

"But where in the park of Versailles, where?"

She reflects for a moment, and then replies with almost feverish haste:

"Do you know where the two branches of the grand canal make a sort of cross? Well, at the foot of that cross, by the side of the Petit Trianon, in the morning about eight o'clock; no one is there at that early hour. It is settled; at the foot of the cross, I will tell you my reasons."

And she disappears once more.

Joyous, with a light heart, that very day the great man conceives the plan of campaign begun at the banquet of Saint-Quentin: a campaign of

propaganda to establish democratic education, a campaign which he carries on indefatigably in at least fifty speeches.

Love has given him new impetus. It will give him many more.

THE CONFESSION

IV

THE CONFESSION

A DELIGHTFUL early morning in autumn; the park of Versailles is deserted. On each side of the cross-shaped piece of water of which she spoke are shrubberies artistically arranged, affording a pleasant shade. One of these shrubberies was the scene of the famous necklace affair.

The Petit Trianon is close by, only a few steps away, silent and fragrant with the perfumes of many flowers. The birds rejoice. Silence reigns in the beautiful park which seems as if it could only speak of the dead and of the past.

Gambetta is the first to arrive at the rendezvous. He paces up and down the avenues. The appointed hour has not yet struck.

If she should not come?

Has she fled from him again? A pang of anguish tells him how large a place she already holds in his existence.

Ah! there she is, at the end of one of the avenues. He hurries to meet her, with both

hands outstretched. Happy, smiling, eager, he calls to her from afar:

"At last! at last!"

She hastens; pale, trembling, her eyes red with weeping, she takes his arm.

"What is the matter?"

"I cried all last night—I who never cry! You cannot understand what courage a woman needs to speak of herself as I want to do. But I must do it, for it is my duty. I should despise myself if I did not do so. I want your esteem before your affection, if ever I am to deserve either. Don't protest, let me tell you everything, let me tell you all about the life of a woman who, since she has known you, has become a little better every day."

When he protests he wants to hear nothing, when he swears that the past matters not to him, that he only cares for the present and the future which belong still to them, she shakes her head, her handkerchief pressed to her lips, saying between the deep-drawn, almost inaudible sobs:

"You must hear me! You must hear me! You must!"

"Come, then," he says at last, and he makes her sit down on a stone bench. He puts his arm around her, gently, respectfully, as if she were a child he wanted to console; and he listens in silence to the cruel confession.

The Confession

"I am the second daughter of Colonel L——, who served at Strasburg under the Duc d'Orléans. The duke trusted him and corresponded with him. My father enjoyed the duke's esteem; he had even given him his portrait. During my childhood our position was almost brilliant. My sister and I had been carefully brought up, but like most officers' daughters we enjoyed a good deal of liberty. It was during the holidays, and we were both at home, that a mysterious story was first noised abroad about our father, who in consequence became taciturn and depressed. Not able to bear the slur cast on his honour by an unfortunate incident, he committed suicide. Orphaned, penniless, inexperienced, friendless, we began to give lessons. Oh! what a cruel thing it is when children have to try to earn their daily bread. Young girls, too, educated partly for charity's sake, partly for pleasure, for the charm which they possess when they are pretty and clever. The fashionable world will never know what a cruel existence these superior domestics lead. The life-story of the young orphan girl without any fortune is usually the story of a martyrdom. The friendships which in their simple hearts they think eternal—ah! what deceptions they are. They devote themselves to this friend and that, and the next day they are only despised. One ought to shun sincerity, warm-heartedness, and affection as

treacherous rocks against which one will only bruise oneself. . . . And when love comes one is defenceless, without a protector, with a conscience still unformed. And one falls never to get up again. For everything depends on those whom chance has placed in our path. . . . God alone is not enough for the orphan."

Gambetta related to one of his friends that, during this first conversation with the woman who was to take, as we shall see, such an immense place in his life, he was deeply touched and astonished.

In his correspondence he repeats again and again how he was delighted and influenced by the elevated thoughts, the calm and sincerity of this perfect soul. This meeting, this adventure, begun in rather a commonplace fashion, which suddenly ceases to be a vulgar affair, becomes dramatic and ends in a noble, loyal passion—what a surprise, what a delight to the simple heart of Gambetta.

He listens in silence, hardly daring to breathe; he listens to the confession of this woman, who, all unmindful of her beauty, tries to express properly what she wants to say, who speaks slowly, endeavouring to control her feelings, and, disdaining to complain, becomes sublime by her very simplicity.

For the first time the woman, with all her

charm and nobility of character, enters into the life of the great man.

She is silent for a moment, and then she recommences, slowly, simply, with her eyes cast down.

"My sister was seduced while still quite young; she has a son whom I love as if he were my own child. I"—here she draws a deep breath as if to repress her sobs and emotion—"I, the same fate awaited me. I came to Paris to give lessons to a young girl in the house of a prominent functionary in the service of the Empire at the Ministry of the Interior, Monsieur K——"

She pronounces the name distinctly, aloud, as if she were striking her breast, and a sob chokes her. Perhaps she will faint. . . .

"Say no more, for pity's sake!" cries Gambetta.

"No, I must tell you all. A few months later I too was ruined. I accuse no one; I bear no one any grudge. Misfortune has made me independent. I schooled myself to forget, and I earned my living and helped to bring up my sister's child. For me life has only held sadness and mortification; but I have earned my liberty, and to-day it is my dearest possession. I wish to live alone, without affection, for you cannot love me. I should only dim your spotless fame.

Gambetta can have nothing in common with a dishonoured, ruined girl. That is what I came to tell you. Let us part, my friend; let us forget each other!"

Let us forget each other! The tender, half-acknowledged confession is uttered involuntarily. Gambetta, the passionate, the romantic, still unaware of the depths of his own strong nature, as revealed to the world by his letters, fervently pleads his cause.

"Forget each other? But it would be ridiculous and cowardly. Strong people can remake their lives. I want to help you; and I too am free—rudderless, drifting about, as I often say, on the sea of a feverish, harassed existence. My mind has many very dear friends, my heart has not even one. The public loves in a rough way; its affection cannot satisfy my longings for a sweet friendship, for a really trustworthy friend. My heart is lonely, as yours is; why not join our two hearts and make an unknown paradise of our two solitary lives? Since chance reunites our loveless liberty, ought we not to follow the inclination which we feel towards each other? It would be madness not to do so. I realised your position. Your sadness, your silence, your immobility attracted and conquered me. I guessed your life's tragedy; you have told me nothing new; your confidence was useless, and I wanted to see you

that I might console you, tell you to hope still, see you smile at last."

And, as if in obedience to his prayer, a smile breaks forth. A smile on her lips, though her eyes are still wet with tears; ah! so doubly sweet, not only because it was the smile of an exquisite woman, but because with it ended a great sorrow.

"Then," she said, "you will not be angry if I keep my liberty and you keep yours? To tell the truth, I was afraid that my request would seem strange, unacceptable, unjustifiable. You cannot marry me, that is certain; we must never mention the subject again. Your fame, your future is at stake, and nothing will ever make me change my mind. I would like—see how ambitious I am! I would like to be the guardian not of your home, for that is impossible, but of your political honour and of your affectionate heart only too easily influenced, which without me would be always at the mercy of vulgar adventures or treacherous ambitions. If you marry some day—and you must do so—I will help you and counsel you like a friend."

He interrupts her. "You are cruel to speak to me of marrying another when it is you I desire and love. What a strange person you are! I accept your conditions—for they are conditions. . . . We will live apart; I shall not have you always by my side, and yet it would

have been so sweet in the mad sort of existence I lead. So be it! Let us join our hearts, though not our liberty. Is that right? Come, give me another smile."

He seizes her hands.

She lets him do so, and then, looking at him earnestly and gravely, she says:

"Our lives must be shrouded in the deepest mystery. None of your relations, none of your friends, must know of our secret. I will take care that none of my own people know anything. Though it may seem impossible to you whose fame is universal, we will hide our lives in a deep night of mystery."

"So be it. I consent;" and he bends towards her to seal his promise with a first kiss.

With a sudden movement she draws back. Still smiling, she says:

"That is not all. Your unknown friend has not followed your career without acquiring some opinions upon *your* opinions! I must tell you them, for what is the use of uniting two hearts if the minds are in direct opposition? I know that perhaps our opinions differ widely. I asked you to come to the foot of the cross formed by the lake at Versailles, influenced by what I will call 'religious superstition,' a term of which you are very fond. I am a devout Catholic. I believe. I want to explain all this to you, for I know you are going to Saint-Quentin where you will speak

on the separation of the Churches from the State. Will you come back here to-morrow? I will make a less cruel confession to you than to-day's has been, but just as necessary. Will you, oh friend, already so dear—will you?"

"Will I? But that is just what I long to do. With my impetuous, fiery nature, I need some one to calm me, to make me reflect. My political friends, the public, the Assemblée, only help to excite my brain. One can only rule others by first ruling one's self, by knowing what one wants, and where one is going. You shall be my daily monitor, my moral guide. Yes, I wish to know your opinions, and, if necessary, I will bravely argue with you, dear soul; for I must be brave, and I am sure, from our daily talks and from yourself, help will come for our dear country, though she may not know it."

And she gives him her dainty hands, which he covers with passionate kisses.

"Good-bye until to-morrow! to-morrow!"

LOVE AND POLITICS

V

LOVE AND POLITICS

THE year 1871 is certainly the most horrible year in our nation's history. Happy are they who did not live through it as we did.

In the beginning of that year peace had been concluded, a humiliating, shameful peace, robbing us of land and money after having taken our life blood.

The men who trample on us, who occupy our territory, a troop of burglars, seem to us like the freebooters of yore, or like modern Huns. None of Goethe's German brethren are they; they are Saxons born before the time of Charlemagne. The German mind, a humane and noble mind, will blush one day to think what is happening just now at Versailles; it will blush when it remembers the heartless destruction of a whole nation, the bombardment of Paris and of the cathedral of Strasburg, as in Rome they blush still to think of the burning of the Alexandrian

library by Julius Cæsar, for that, too, was a crime against civilisation.

But war, in short, means the terrible shedding of blood and a general upheaval. As in an earthquake or volcanic eruption, men feel as if the end of the world had come. And they bend their heads before fate. But the civil war which is now desolating the land is the quintessence of hate. Every moment a cry of pain goes up to Heaven. Our unhappy country is like a man who has just lost a limb, and on whom the surgeon still continues to operate. The enemy is still there at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges; ten departments are overrun by those spiked helmets. The Assemblée Nationale deliberates in dejection; while court-martials order executions, and in Paris barricades spring up by the light of incendiarism.

The different political parties tear one another to pieces: Bonapartists, Orleanists, Legitimists, each party hopes to get the upper hand over the Republicans.

Grévy says to Scheurer-Kestner: "France must not even think of war. She must accept the actual state of affairs. She must give up Alsace and Lorraine."

And Gambetta prefers to descend from the rostrum rather than vote for peace, a vote which is passed by 346 French representatives against 107. He refuses as long as barracks, arsenals, and depots contain 222,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry,

34,000 artillery, 350,000 reservists, 13,000 recruits of the year 1870, 1675 cannons and the batteries of all the departments.

Paul and Victor Margueritte say: "The Assemblée, anxious to have done with the whole affair, has just traced the red line on the map—like a bleeding wound."

Everywhere we see incapacity, confusion, suspicion, hatred, dissension.

Unhappy country.

In Versailles, which has seen all the horrors of a foreign war, a humiliating peace, and civil strife, and has watched the nation growing weaker day by day, Gambetta and his friend, forgetful of their love duet, talk hotly of the painful events of the day.

Mysterious fate! It is these two walking together, talking in the stillness with hushed voices, these two beings unremarked amid the crowd, leaning upon each other in one sweet and confiding harmony, who will one day give us calm and peace and a definite government to France.

Gambetta says: "I spared no effort in my endeavour to unite them. I assembled all the members of the Left together in the hall of the Jeu de Paume; my propositions only met with determined opposition. Thiers was very near

calling me a 'furious fool,' as he did once before; Grévy, as usual full of spite, urged on his faithful followers; I won't mention Jules Simon. Amable Ricard put the finishing touches. And with an enormous majority, they decided to support the three Left groups!

"Three republican groups—so many enemies sworn to fight against us. Ah! there are too many personal ambitions, too many jealousies hidden under the mask of proud independence. This scattering of the party's strength will bring about Thiers' ruin, and that will be a great misfortune."

A voice replies: "Do not despair, my friend. They struggle against your influence because it is still new to them; the old republicans of 1848 have taken offence because Republican France already acknowledges the young man as its leader. Your manner is too persuasive not to 'tame the old ones'; Victor Hugo, Schoelcher and Peyrat are already on your side——"

"Yes, but Quinet and Louis Blanc will never give in."

"No matter, they are isolated. It is the mass of the Left which you must go on conquering with untiring patience. Believe me, who for so many years followed you faithfully in the struggle. I am like the echo from outside; perhaps a little partial, I grant, but clear-sighted. Let me tell you something different from the cry of the

public which loves clap-trap episodes and heroic attitudes. Be more and more persuasive. Offend no one. Keep, if you wish, to the neutral ground of principles; try to inaugurate a 'policy of results.' Let the country feel that the old political parties might possibly adapt themselves to a new form of government. Hold out hopes of a practical and novel solution still indefinite, but let them feel that you, and you alone, can give them this solution. For, at the present moment, one man alone hopes, one man alone sees, in the July elections which have just taken place, signs of the country's awakening. Alone he plans to group all the democratic forces into one union, that thus he may bind the country together. During the elections for the general councillors he alone, present everywhere, will be able to give back hope to the country. The people always turn towards hope, and to-day you alone, my friend, represent it."

"Do you know, dear gentle friend, that you are an ardent politician, and I confess that this morning I was almost in despair. Thiers, Grévy, and Louis Blanc make me feel a prisoner, paralyse my efforts. You are right; I will put down my name among the members of the radical Left, and from their ranks I will hold out my hand, as you say, with untiring patience to all republicans. We shall soon see if they are always going to turn their backs on me. But if I am on the Left,

during the election campaign, I shall be obliged to profess radical, socialistic, and anti-clerical opinions! However, that will suit me. What do you think about it? Would it not be dangerous? The day after to-morrow I make my speech at Saint-Quentin; will you tell me, my beautiful Egeria, what you would say in my place?"

"When you have told me your thoughts, dear great man, I will venture humbly to tell you mine."

"Well, I mean to speak of the people's education. We must give some hope to these poor minds so overwhelmed by sorrow. The nation must see that it can rise again not only materially but morally. For by so doing, we can win great victories over Europe, and over Germany in particular, without shedding one drop of blood, attacking it by socialism, by freeing the people's mind, and by republican ideas. So I will say at Saint-Quentin[1]: 'Let us open the book of history. Unhappily, we read there that always the last progress to be accomplished is the true progress of public education. They, whose interest it is to exploit their fellow men and to keep them for ever in ignorance, understand that every time a man is taught to read they gain an enemy. And I hold that this progress cannot be accomplished by giving a superficial, gratuitous,

[1] The following lines are nearly identical with the speech made by Gambetta at Saint-Quentin.

and obligatory instruction, but by a superior education, for we must ever try to raise the standard of science if we wish to increase the numbers of just, free, and strong men. That is why, in the republican programme, I have always placed the education of the masses as the first reform to be made; but this education must above all be permeated by a modern spirit and must be imparted according to the laws and rights of our society. I desire, therefore, with all the strength of my soul to see not only the *separation of Churches and State, but the separation of the schools from the Church.* I hold this as necessary to political order and even to social order.'"

The voice says: "Here I must interrupt you. Do you think it wise just now to bring up the religious question? Don't you think that you can only broach the question of the programme and *desiderata* of the democracy after the material renovation of the country? I am, I must tell you, deeply religious. Well! I think that the idea of separating Church from State is premature. It will come later, it is perhaps inevitable, but to-day the country has other things to think of."

"You are mistaken," replies Gambetta. "It is never too soon to proclaim a new truth. France loves to be in the vanguard."

"But the clergy are so powerful. Would you set them against us?"

"Let us discriminate, let us discriminate. I shall say: Once in the old days of French monarchy there was a great clergy true to the traditions of religious and national independence The Church of France always knew how to keep itself aloof from the pretensions of ultramontanes, and by so doing she earned the respect of the whole world. Well! that Church has disappeared because, under a pretext of combating revolutionary ideas, but in reality by an instinctive love of domination, the upper clergy, first little by little, then more and more, drew their recruits from among the representatives of the most uncompromising Roman doctrine; so that to-day the real French clergy no longer exist, at least in the upper ranks. However, a portion still remains of the clergy who might bring back the old traditions: I mean the lower clergy. The lower clergy! so called because they are like slaves in the tyrant's hands; they are quite low; they are the humblest, the most resigned, the most modest members of the Church. 'The lower clergy are like a regiment of soldiers!' a proud cardinal once declared in the midst of the Senate: 'when I speak, they have to march!' I can never read those imperious words without indignation. Yes, I have gone over to the free-thinkers, I consider that nothing can surpass human science; and yet I cannot help feeling awed and touched when I think of these men

who are spoken of so disdainfully and who form the lower clergy. No, I cannot help liking the humble *curé*, the man who having acquired some slight, very incomplete, very confused knowledge, goes back to dwell among that robust, healthy, rural population from which he sprang. Both priest and peasant, he lives among the peasantry, he sees their hard and difficult struggles for existence. His mission is to lighten their burdens; he puts his whole soul into the task; he helps them and consoles them. In the dangers and perils of invasion, I saw many prove themselves ardent and devoted patriots; they belong to democracy, they are attracted by it; and if they dared to confess it, more than one would proclaim himself a democrat and a republican. . . . Well, it is these country *curés* whom we must educate, liberate, emancipate; all the clergy must be like them, so that the cruel name of 'lower clergy' may no longer mean servitude. You see clearly then, that, far from being the clergy's enemy, we only want to see them revert to the old democratic conditions of their predecessors in the great Assemblée Constituante, and identify themselves with the rest of France as a strong republican nation."

"Bravo! bravo!"

"You see, my friend, that I do not hate the clergy though I am the apostle of the doctrine of reason. But it seems to me that we are wearing

out the subject of politics. If we were to speak a little . . . of love?"

"No, no, to-morrow—to-morrow we will think of ourselves. To-day, the morning has been devoted to our country. We must not let it suffer any neglect at our hands."

And the charming creature moves away, and Gambetta the romantic wafts kisses towards her, accompanied by this enigmatical sentence:

"To-morrow shall see our betrothal."

THE ENGAGEMENT RING

VI

THE ENGAGEMENT RING

THIS time she is first at the place of meeting. Her tall, elegant figure throws a harmonious shadow on the masses of greenery rapidly fading at the approach of autumn.

The great man arrives at last with hurried steps, a rather untidy bouquet in his hands. He gathered it himself as he came through the gardens of the Petit Trianon, for he knows the gardener.

"Here are some flowers to beg your forgiveness."

And the conversation begins with the day's news.

An important event has just taken place, and, notwithstanding a slight embarrassment and a secret desire to talk of themselves, they discuss for a moment Bismarck's letter to Count von Arnim in Paris, in which, with contemptuous terms, he threatens France with another invasion if a Prussian officer who had disappeared at Chaumont is not instantly found.

Gambetta is excited and talks of reorganising our armies, of denouncing the humiliating peace, of accepting the challenge. His blood boils. Bismarck at this moment seems his sworn, his only enemy.

She gazes in admiration at this great, roaring, threatening orator; then, gently, as if to try her power on this amorous lion, in a low, tender voice she says, while sitting down on the stone seat, his flowers in her hand:

"Tell me about your mother."

"You want me to talk to you of my mother? What a delightful idea, dear one! Yes, you are right, you are perfectly right; her remembrance must be present here to-day, she must be with us, with me especially, to help me to ask you something. My mother is the one great affection of my life. I have had no other passion, and my heart has only really been touched one other time, and that was when I first saw you. My mother is descended from an old Quercy family; she has old French blood in her veins; loves to teach for teaching's sake; she reads and thinks, and therefore she has made me read and think too. All well-educated men have had well-educated mothers. Mine taught me to read the works of Armand Carrel; and nothing which seriously interests the human mind is indifferent to her. She first sent me to the little seminary

at Montfaucon near Bergerac; then, because I was too far away from her, she sent me to the college of Cahors. Ah! those pleasant, thorough, sensible lessons superintended by *maman* Orasie, with all the tasks conscientiously completed, the dear paternal homestead, the day-school, perhaps rather rough, but healthy, well ventilated, good for body and mind. You see, Latin, Greek, and History are valuable things with which to furnish one's brain. She used to say: 'You must know everything, so begin about it at once.' And when I told her that, in order to complete my intellectual equipment, I must go to Paris to make my final studies, then gladly, without any Roman Matron lamentations, she consented. Politics and History attracted her also, and she sent me to Paris to let me see politics in the making. I followed exactly the plans she had traced. In 1860 I registered my name at the bar, and since that time, at her desire, I serve my country. You see, nothing has been more simple than my life. I have done what my adorable mother wished me to do, and all has gone well with me. She used to say laughingly: 'Thy country is thy vocation!' And I obeyed. Listen, my friend; in my opinion those little women like my mother, the little provincial bourgeoise, help to make the charm, the universal radiancy, the indestructible force of French thought. After a long and obscure period of

two or three centuries, these little bourgeoises have given birth to the men of the French revolution. It is they who continue to give their country all that is best and purest. The pretty, modest, well-educated bourgeoise is incomparably charming. Stop, I know one . . . who . . ."

And his eye catches his friend's smiling glance.

She replies playfully: "You know one? That is only an empty phrase; do you really know her?"

And the enchantress pouts mischievously.

She continues: "For four days you have seen me every morning, your little French bourgeoise for whom you profess so much indulgence and partiality, and you must allow that is not sufficient."

And, as she speaks, she laughs lightly.

A silence follows, rather a long silence, during which Gambetta's face grows almost grave.

"Shall I draw your portrait?" he asks in the passionate, fascinating voice which he knows so well how to use when he wants to charm.

"Well, the little bourgeoise has a wonderful nature, still more, a wonderful will of her own, and what distinguishes her even more is that she is sincere and loyal. Am I right?"

Again a silence,—their hands touch.

"And what if I said that I would rather trust

myself to her than to a thousand of my friends; that I trust her intelligence completely, and that I will, if she likes, invoke her judgment as well as her affection?"

"Are you a magician? But you do not know her faults; I will tell you all about them. She is obstinate, she loves mystery, your little bourgeoise. Obstinate is a trifle strong perhaps, but she is very fond of her own opinions; she does not change them quickly; they are the result of reflections, comparisons, mysterious atavisms. She occasionally modifies them when she meets with a certain magician in the art of thinking and acting, but then only slowly, and her opinions still adhere to the moral whole by invisible threads. . . . Mysterious? Ah! that is my great fault, my friend. Against my own will, notwithstanding events, notwithstanding the moral progress made each day, my soul remains full of an atavism half superstitious, wholly poetical, believing absolutely in God, respectful of all people and all things which speak of Him, and revering our religion, which is but a form of divine speech. My dearest friend, the one I love most passionately, could not drive God from my soul. I tell you this that there may be no misunderstanding between us; not that the love of God is stronger in my heart than love itself, for, by the law of nature, they are but one, and to banish one would be to banish the other."

She says this with such a sincere, simple, charming expression that the lover of to-morrow seems entranced.

"Dear, adorable woman, thou dost not know what joy it is to read thy beautiful soul like an open book; the true, the real love is to understand each other, to search the inmost recesses of the heart and brain; not to end by thinking alike, for nothing is alike in nature, but to guess each other's thoughts according to the judgment and principles of each mind — that is supreme joy, supreme security in life. . . . Now, thou must hear my confession as I have heard thine. Well! I am not inimical to religion, I am only the enemy of religion employed as a means to dominate, to enslave, by men who thus dishonour its nobleness. My enemies are clericalism and ultramontanism. Go to your chapels, assemble in your churches, believe, confess, pray. Liberty is all I ask for, equal liberty for thee and me, for my philosophy as for thy religion, for my liberty to think as for thy liberty to pray. Do not hold me an enemy to faith, because I desire to see it secure, free, and inviolate. I swear never to oppress thy faith; thy belief will fraternise peaceably, calmly, reciprocally, freely with my positivism. Shall we to-day, as an act of faith in ourselves and in our own wills, celebrate our betrothal, the prelude to our future union?"

A long silence,—their hands part.

"It would be wrong to deceive you. Do not let us even hope for that impossible happiness. You do not want me to remember a dead past, and so we will talk no more about it; but for your sake I sacrifice the home I long for, for you whose fame must be spotless. France expects everything of Gambetta. His country, the world, must not think him prone to human weaknesses. My ambition for you is boundless, perhaps immoderate; I want to see you at the head of your country, creating order, moral life, prosperity, liberty; you cannot begin by a fault which would reflect on the whole country and would ruin your task at the very outset. And then, if in my weakness, overpersuaded by your tenderness, I consented to the union, there would still be an insurmountable obstacle—myself. I abhor the idea of a civil marriage without the priest's blessing. My whole being revolts against it as against something completely repugnant. *A marriage without God's sanction would never efface my past; a marriage sanctified by Him alone can efface it.*"

And the tenderly cruel voice is choked by sobs.

His reply is not long in coming; Gambetta is a clear-headed man who knows his own mind.

"Then let it be," and his voice becomes authoritative and strangely solemn. "But swear

to me that if I fail, if I am unhappy, misunderstood, persecuted, that you will still give me the home I crave for ?"

"I swear to you with my whole soul."

"Then be my wife in secret, dear adorable one; let us celebrate our betrothal to-day according to the rites of by-gone days, a religious betrothal if thou wilt, like the rites which were once as binding as marriage ties, even though the priest was not present. In thy tender thoughtfulness thou hast invoked the memory of my mother Orasie; in this solemn moment let us call her to witness our vows. Take this ring, it will remind our two hearts of the day when they were first united. Its emblem is mine: '*Hors cet annel point n'est d'amour.*' It binds me to thee for ever."

His friend's sweet voice replies: "My dear, my dear, it is mine also. I love you, as you love me."

And their lips meet in a first kiss.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THEIR SOULS

VII

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THEIR SOULS

GAMBETTA, when he gave the form of a betrothal to his union with the woman he loved, all unwittingly, did a very clever thing.

Perhaps, notwithstanding the great inclination which drew her towards him, this honest whole-hearted woman would never have consented to a vulgar haphazard liaison. The past had taught her a cruel lesson, her whole being rejected the idea of a free, chance union; she needed a holier tie, something supernatural to which she could cling when she gave herself for the second time (for the first time not love, but skilfully planned treachery had caused her fall).

While Gambetta, completely absorbed by his great passion for her, longs to see his love reciprocated, she struggles against herself, against all her religious principles. How impossible for the former lady-president of the guild of Saint Vincent de Paul at Arras to become the acknowledged mistress of a public man, a democrat, a

freethinker, perhaps an atheist! So it is with real joy she hears the great orator, for her sake perhaps, make his speech at Saint-Quentin, extolling the humble shepherd of souls on the country-side; and when he assures her he is not inimical to religion, that he only wants it to keep in its proper place, respected and free, she is ready to clasp him in her arms and to give him the kiss, half profane, half divine, authorised by the Church in moments of great enthusiasm.

Surely, this clear, straightforward conscience must have a director, a confessor somewhere who listens to all the secrets of the young girl and woman.

She has indeed a director, one of the most elevated minds of the time; but as this story has nothing to do with scandals or personal remarks, and as no name except Gambetta's is mentioned, we will not speak further of Father X., whose memory is universally respected.

Here is the substance of a letter received by the director on the very day of his penitent's betrothal; this letter marks the close of a long correspondence.

"Father, some time ago I asked you verbally to tell and explain to me the meaning of a betrothal, for which explanation I am truly grateful. You have taken a load off my soul. If I rightly understand you, the Church admits of two sorts of betrothal: The '*Sponsalia de praesente*'

and the '*Sponsalia de futuro.*' The Church holds that 'betrothal by present vows' is equivalent, under unavoidable circumstances, to the sacrament of holy matrimony. It was a contract made between two persons declaring that henceforth they would live together as man and wife. The 'betrothal by future vows,' on the contrary, was only used when the man and woman promised to marry each other at some future date.

"I beg to inform you, Father, that I have taken your advice. This day I betrothed myself 'by present vows' to the man whose name I mentioned to you. I trust you approve of my conduct and will not refuse me your blessing."

Such is the psychology of this true believer's soul endeavouring, according to her Christian faith, to hallow her great passion for the most charming man of his time. Where does one find a more beautiful struggle, a more noble aspiration?

A new affection is to be born in her simple heart so full of love and faith—the love of her native land; and she hopes earnestly to be useful to it by entering into the life of the man who apparently is to rule the great nation's destiny. One cannot help admiring this noble character, trying to conciliate three religions: Love, God, and Country, and our admiration will be justified by her life of trial, sacrifice, and devotion.

The Heart of Gambetta

Gambetta's love, or rather passion, as his letters prove it to have been, goes on increasing until his death, rising like incense round this perfect creature, purifying and absolving her.

At this time Gambetta's psychology differs entirely from hers, except on the subjects of love of country and their mutual passion.

We will endeavour to explain it.

Public life is full of underhand dealings and hidden spite, which the politician tries to hide with a certain feeling of shame.

Applause is certainly pleasant; to see people converted to one's own ideas after a long struggle is a reward; to feel that one has made some progress, to act for the public good, gives keen satisfaction to an active, genial nature like Gambetta's.

But in the end that is all; the sober joy of doing one's duty (when that duty is accomplished loyally and honestly), the intoxicating breath of fame, the gratification of a vanity, noble no doubt, but still a vanity.

And on the other side, what a contrast! The popular politician is surrounded by a swarm of petty interests, calculations, envy, jealousy, confessed and unconfessable ambitions.

It is impossible to distinguish legitimate motives and noble disinterestedness from intrigues, conspiracies, and vulgar passions. The humblest

canvasser, as well as the influential elector, is a hard calculator and an intriguer. The man who votes as his conscience prompts him to do, without any interested motives, is practically unknown. Our sincerest friends of a day are often the most unreasonable, and propose the maddest schemes; and they are often terribly compromising. Some one suggests, in an arduous moment, a bargain, some little affair of blackmail skilfully disguised and not very creditable to its author. If you don't accept his offer, he is hurt, scandalised. Another friend suggests some mock-heroic attitude, some stupid panacea; nothing is more difficult to refute than a plain, incontestable absurdity. One's real friends are even more embarrassing.. Having watched the deputy from the very beginning of his career, they have a claim on his friendship. They allow no irresolution, no mistakes to pass unnoticed; and if you do not listen to their friendly, but somewhat tyrannical admonitions, they never fail to remind you of your former failures: "You remember, you would do it! I told you so!"

Old friends, new friends, calculating friends, disguised friends, all species of zealots (for politics seem to cause a special form of madness) surround the celebrity with an artificial atmosphere bound more or less to affect his moral health.

If then, like Gambetta, a politician aspires to guide, to command all these different interests,

to show them the road they must follow, to h himself in short out of the political quagmire :

> " Like to the ancient Roman who with hand
> Firm on the altar placed to attest his vow,
> Though they insult him, yet with pride replies :
> 'That day I swear I saved my country's fame.' "

Oh, then, what a sea of slander, lies, jealous breaks over the rock which dares to emerge fro the vulgar ocean! The patriot's soul, attacke misunderstood, seeks a refuge, a hearth, not hide himself, but that he may think and wee over his lost illusions, and forgive in peace. Ye the honest politician, without a home, is like ship always on the high seas, always trying t keep back the tears, never able to rest in th haven. He is doomed to premature death an despair.

Later, when ingratitude and human stupidity have done their work, when the accusation o dictatorship has deeply wounded him, we shal see Gambetta on his knees begging the adored woman of his choice to soothe, by her presenc in his home, the wound in his heart (not in hi hand) made by his fellow politicians. Faithful t the promise made on the day of their betrothal she will consent to console him in face of th whole world. But it will be too late then, th great man will die, human ingratitude will hav done its work.

In short, at the present moment, the state o

the two souls, whose secrets we have tried to explain, is most noble and simple.

He is looking for a tender counsellor independent of all outside interests, a moral rest after the daily struggle, a sister conscience in whose presence he can speak and examine his own without danger.

She longs for a husband before God, together with faith and liberty, everything for the great man's good.

But poor and free, both aspire equally to love and the union of their two beings.

Their love will be passionate and exclusive. And their daily life will teach us the sublimest lesson. They will teach us that, though their moral horizons were different, their affection, strong through all trials, will lead by mutual concessions to one united thought and to the final union of their two souls.

THE MEETINGS AT THE "RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE"

VIII

THE MEETINGS AT THE "RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE"

AS his friend had foretold, Gambetta, hurried on by events, appears a few days later as "the hope of his country," and finds the capital necessary to publish a paper in which to express his public opinions—to be the official medium of the republicans : The *République Française.*

His devoted confrère, the good Spuller, is there, following him about like his political shadow, watching his every gesture, silent when he speaks, keeping guard carefully over him.

The *République Française* is like a beacon towards which the eyes of the whole country are turned. The house in the Chaussée d'Antin is the scene of continual coming and going. The crowd ascends, descends, calls, waits in the anterooms. All the well-known people pass in turn through its *bureaux.* The watchword is given there, and every morning the whole of republican France waits for the day's political forecast and shapes

its opinion accordingly. Republican papers are scarce at this time; the most republican ones seem but half-hearted or shaken by adverse influences. They are all groping in the dark. The *République Française* alone has its political flag proudly unfurled, its leader at its head, marching with a firm, triumphant step.

Gambetta's private life is never touched by the breath of any story or scandal, and Heaven knows how the orator is watched, spied on by all parties. It is one of the most astonishing things of our time to learn how the private life of such a well-known man as Gambetta was so completely shielded from public gaze that after twenty-five years we publish here, for the first time, such absolutely new details. This secrecy seems somewhat to disconcert the Press, so accustomed to complete and minute accounts of all the men of the day.

The tacit agreement to leave friends and relations in ignorance of their attachment, and to live and love in freedom, is admirably kept. But the cleverest part is that these two lovers can meet not by stealth, far from Paris in some mysterious corner, but at any time in this house in the rue de la Chaussée d'Antin where the lights shine, where visitors, noise, and work are omnipresent. A conspirator once said: "If you hide, you only attract attention." How true!

An attentive observer, however, might have seen in January, 1872, a closed carriage, driven by Gambetta's coachman Louis, silent as the tomb, stop sometimes at the foot of the staircase leading to the orator's apartments. A pretty young woman descends. It is she!

How gracefully she walks; and how elegant she looks in the dark blue costume made by her own fairy fingers. The microscopical hat, with its wide strings meeting under the small, refined chin, is quite a poem. Who can tell during how many evenings she sat up to make this little work of art?

She has wonderful hair, massed up into two great dark waved bandeaux, framing a forehead rather too high, but white and polished like ivory. Her eyebrows, so regular and straight that they look as if painted, are slightly arched above the smiling honest eyes—for eyes can smile.

But without mentioning the refined, delicately modelled nose, the most perfect feature in this charming face is the mouth, admirably fashioned, just open to show the white sparkling teeth, and assuming in speech such a variable expression, mimetic, roguish, or tender as the case may be, and thereby unknowingly doubling the charm of the ideas expressed.

Who was it who said that woman's mouth is supremely enchanting, since it gives simultaneously the thought and the kiss?

And then there is the whole *ensemble* of the features, that indescribable harmony which at first sight causes the spectator either pleasure or aversion.

It is a mysterious impression that gives birth to love at first sight and sometimes decides a person's whole fate! It was this impression of beauty hand-in-hand with integrity, which charmed the man on first beholding her in 1869, at the *séance* of the Corps Législatif.

Her high intellectual forehead convinced him that she was something more than merely a pretty woman; her smiling eyes were full of promises of playful tenderness; her mouth spoke to him of a great and sincere affection.

Furtively she ascends to the apartment. The door closes after her. In the little dining-room two places are laid; the dinner is there, quite ready, just come in from the neighbouring restaurant. There are lights everywhere. The impromptu mistress of the house is busy over little details; the day's events are discussed, and the two lovers begin their meal, happy and delighted to be alone together, able to tell each other all their thoughts, to criticise events, to sum up men and things.

Ah! my reporter friends, why were you not there to hear Gambetta's opinion of Thiers, Mac-Mahon, Bismarck, and all the others who were

then making the burning, palpitating history of our poor nation?

Then, after these too rare *tête-à-tête* meetings, come Gambetta's letters sent to his friend during the course of these varied events. These letters are extraordinarily tender and passionate. They show us an unknown side of Gambetta's nature.

They are said, and rightly so, to be even more beautiful than Mirabeau's letters to Sophie. They will show us how a great heart can unite in one worship the love of country and the love of the woman adored.

GAMBETTA'S LETTERS

IX

GAMBETTA'S LETTERS

I

1873–1882

"February 25th, 1873.

"DEAR LITTLE ONE,

"I thank thee from the depths of my heart for the two precious letters sent in response to mine. To-day, more than ever before, I feel inexpressibly comforted to receive such consoling tenderness, and it will help me to face the most irritating obstacles; for thy heart, clear-seeing from afar as from near, is not mistaken. I am very anxious, very worried, even very undecided; I feel expedients and the quite contrary decisions struggling in my brain; I feel simultaneously the greatest fear and the most enthusiastic hope. . . . I embrace thee, I beg thee to write to me, and I place myself at thy feet."

"December 21st, 1873.

"My dear Adorable Little One,

"Do not worry and do not traduce thy charms. I cannot tell thee how happy and touched I am by these unjustified fears; and how, far from finding thy society sad and melancholy, I like to feel thee perfectly natural, easy, swayed by thy own serious nature, ennobled, playful, without affectation or reserve. That is just how I would have thee, how I imagined thee, a true woman, strong of heart and head, always superior to life's emotions and to the blows of fate. The dreadful trials through which thou art going, though they be terrible (and they are so terrible that I feel them through thee) teach me that I could not have made a better choice—that she, my heart's elected, is the brave companion so necessary to me in my unstable life. Judge then of the enormity of thy error; what frightens thee is exactly what comforts me; and the grave firmness which thou showest in life's struggle, is the very thing which attracts me and keeps me so firmly enchained to thee. Besides, one must never force oneself to laugh; laughter must be born, must be spontaneous; it is only wholesome and seemly when provoked by happy circumstances, and very seldom, in our sad times, can it be found. Our unfortunate country, torn and vilified by those at home, mutilated and perchance threatened by those

abroad, would be quite justified to call any criminal and untimely gaiety to account. The days of lasting happiness are gone, and for long; and one of the reasons (and that not the smallest), which binds thee to my soul in a sober mutual affection devoted to my wife and country, is the community of your misfortunes.

"And then I imagine that thou, at least, art near the end of thy afflictions; but with insurmountable feelings of terror and anguish I see the new year dawning for France; we are badly governed, badly directed, and grappling with those formidable, rapacious Germans. I tremble to see the terrible year recommence, to find the government obliged to face another invasion with a disorganised army, a country still more depressed, Europe more servile than ever; ah! I shudder for all that remains of France. But enough. Come and see me on Monday. I adore thee, I kiss thy beautiful eyes."

"March 9th, 1873.

"DEAR ADORED ONE,

"Thou art a fairy, and I know nothing more gracious, more kind than thy delicate thoughtfulness. I made my aunt quite ashamed; but it is all too beautiful and profuse; it is unnecessary. I beg thee to come back at once so that I may scold thee at leisure; come at least on Tuesday if not on Monday; we will spend

another of those divine evenings which seem to me, on the morrow, like the memory of some supernal happiness. Moreover, politics are progressing wonderfully well, and I shall be glad to chat with thee about them. I have almost decided to give up speaking on the Second Chamber; the old pensioner (Monsieur Thiers) is quite well again; his health, so valuable to every one, no longer causes us any alarm; after all, our Constitution gets along very well, and I would not change it for anything, so I shall be silent until next time.

"But at least I must have the happiness of kneeling at thy feet, for I cannot allow thee to let such long intervals elapse between thy visits. Come, I call thee, I await thee, I adore thee."

II

1873–1875

This period corresponds with the fall of Monsieur Thiers in May, 1873, and with the presidency of Marshal MacMahon. It is during this period of endeavours to restore the monarchy, that Gambetta leads with unexampled energy the resistance of the Left. He says: "Never have calm and force been more necessary. Keep cool. France and the Republic are at stake." And they listen to him. At this time the Comte de

Chambord declares that he cannot renounce the white flag, and the Right is obliged to maintain a provisional position until the count's death. Then Gambetta negotiates with the Centre on this basis: either dissolution, or the establishment of the Republic by the Assemblée.

This last resolution is at last adopted by 353 votes against 352, and the Wallon Constitution is voted. The Republic is established.

It is during this period of grand heroic and political struggles that Gambetta writes the following wonderful letters:—

"1874.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"We have the same feelings; our souls have never been more attuned, and I enjoy to the utmost a love such as the noblest minds imagined in past times. Thou alone, among all women, hast known how to lead me to the very summits of passion and communion of spirit. All sensations seem alike to me, all delicate, all exquisite, and the most sensual longings are purified by the domination of mind. My brain is filled with an endless theme of meditations and hidden joys; and it is to thee, to thee alone, that I owe this better and more beautiful world, vainly sought after and never found by so many great hearts among the shameful temptations of an ill-governed life. And so I adore thee as the saints

adore God, as a pure spirit. I press thee passionately in my arms; come to-morrow at any time thou wilt; I will throw myself at thy feet."

"March 4th, 1874.

"My Dear Adored One,

"This morning's *Officiel* announces the assembly of electors for Haute Marne and Gironde. I have decided to start in the strictest incognito for Bordeaux in an hour's time. I shall be back by Saturday morning at the latest. I beg thee not to write to me, so that the post-office may not know of my presence; I will write to thee every day without fail, I promise. I am going off rather in a hurry, the honey still upon my lips, and I shall soon be back with the honey-comb. Take care of thyself, calm thyself; I assure thee that thy moral strength astonishes me; I am quite anxious about thee and longing to see thee mistress of thy feelings again and superior to thy fate.

"The horizon grows lighter; one can see the dawn breaking; still a little patience, and we shall see the glorious dawn of our happy and united life! Be brave and hopeful. Remember that I love thee more than life, more than fame. I throw myself at thy feet.

"P.S.—Ollivier's reception is indefinitely postponed."

"April 9th, 1874.

"My ALL-BELOVED,

"I have received thy charming note, and I send thee back an echo from thy own heart. Never have I loved thee so much as now; thou must feel that the mad impatience which assails me by fits and starts is only caused by the immense tenderness I feel for thee, the bitterness of seeing thee in pain, and knowing myself powerless to give thee happiness and health. My whole being belongs to thee; I cannot bear to think that the woman on whose head are concentrated all my pride, ambition, love, and passion, can suffer one single moment and suffer for me.

"I adore thee with my heart's deepest and best feelings; and if thou wert here, as thou wilt be on Monday, I would kiss thee so eloquently that thou wouldst see that I am indeed thine for ever."

"September 22nd, 1874.

"DEAR ADORABLE LITTLE ONE,

"I also grieve to see another of these mild, beautiful autumn days pass far from thee, ceaselessly calling and never seeing thee; ah! how some day we shall regret these happy, amorous hours of youth, and then it will be too late!

"Come, then, as soon as possible, and let us

fill our eyes and hearts with light, sensations, and impressions. Thou knowest well where I would lead thee. Little one, why dost thou delay, and why dost thou let thyself be hindered at every step by trivialities and by social duties? We are our own masters; nature calls us; she has dressed herself in all her finery in our honour. So I shall expect thee on Thursday; we will start on Friday and be back on Saturday night at the latest. Send me a definite reply, because I must send notice of our arrival.

"I adore thee and I embrace thee till I am breathless."

"January 13th, 1875.

"DEAR BELOVED LITTLE ONE,

"Thou art the most incomparable little charmer that nature's hands ever fashioned, and I daily feel myself overwhelmed with gratitude to fate for choosing me among all mankind to witness this dazzling fairy-tale of grace and enchantment.

"I can never decide whether my heart or my head is the more delighted; when I think I have settled it, when my heart feels most deeply touched, then the head protests and proves that it has the greatest cause to be transported and enamoured. Yesterday thou didst go beyond me, thou didst surpass thyself; I am still under the spell; thy little letter, so delicious, so inte-

resting, prolonged my ecstasy, and I began my day's work under the happiest auspices.

"And see what a great and splendid victory we won to-day! The French army is saved, the future assured, our country will renew itself; we shall live just long enough to hail the avengers of our country's wrongs; and that day we can proudly cry: 'Our love was the spirit which inspired these patriotic efforts, and my Léonie was the soul of those efforts.'" [1]

"April 22nd, 1875.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"Thanks to thy charming visit, the day began under most favourable auspices; my mind was quite enlightened by it, and the results satisfy me pretty well. Nevertheless, my heart goes violently pit-a-pat. I am doubling a dangerous cape, and shall only grow calm when safely on land; until then I try a thousand different courses without deciding which to take. My brain seems filled with a shifting, clammy mist, something like the atmosphere before the world was created out of chaos. At the bottom a star shines, thy star, our star, sent as a guide to lead me out of the mist.

"Until to-morrow, then, and may good luck smile on me! After this prodigious effort I

[1] This admirable letter was inspired by Gambetta's conviction that the Republic would eventually triumph.

shall only have to celebrate the anniversary of our love, and go, still redolent of thy perfumes, to seek fresh air and repose somewhere. All these opposite ideas blend with my meditations, and seriously interrupt them; I am feverish, nervous, and it is high time to finish.

"Happily, love supports me, and it is love I evoke; I am going to fight for it and with it.

"Léonie, *ora pro nobis.*"

"August 17th, 1875.

"DEAR ADORABLE LITTLE ONE,

"Well hast thou said: 'Thou dost only put into words what my heart well knew when thou declarest that in thy presence I should ever feel strong and take fresh courage.' Thou art ever my clear-sighted, steadfast counsellor; no matter how highly, no matter how deeply I analyse my life's circumstances, since fate united us, I see thee always inspiring my best deeds, wisely guiding my actions, and I love thee as the Greeks must have of old loved their household goddess Minerva. What faults hast thou not helped me to avoid! how often hast thou put kind words into my mouth! what fits of impatience and anger hast thou not warded off! I bless thee in my heart for all thy good influence over me. How could I ever fail in my devotion to thee? Thou, whom I know to be the very essence of my actions and the better

part of my reason! To lessen my love for thee would be to disown myself and to renounce everything after which I am seeking.

"Yesterday I got through a good deal of work, and on my way I visited a fine villa full of monuments, historical objects, and national souvenirs. I did little, thought much, and, in short, I came back to Paris a little better than when I left. To-morrow we will chat longer. Outside events grow visibly more serious, and I get more and more anxious. The incapable men who rule us make me tremble every minute. What adversaries stand in our path!

"The third part of the article on the two chancellors has appeared in the *Revue*. It will show thee all we have to fear from such enemies; and at the same time it confirms exactly, and as if purposely, the fears I mentioned to thee during our last meeting. But I will postpone the rest till to-morrow; I will come and fetch thee about two o'clock.

"Meanwhile I adore thee and embrace thee."

"October 23rd, 1875.

"My Best Beloved,

"Well! hast thou descended to earth again, hast thou come down from the regions above? What is this sublime new world which we suddenly visited yesterday? Is it the lost Atlantis of the ancients where, as the Golden

Legend tells us, sister souls meet again and love for all eternity? How can I tell? At the risk of losing my senses, I let myself hover to and fro in this sublime ether where desire ends, because passion is lasting and always satisfied. The whole past gives way under my feet and disappears into space, so mean and futile does it seem to me. I feel as if (myself an atom risen from a dark abyss) I were swimming in a pure sidereal light. Words seem too vulgar and clumsy to express the delicate and almost fluid sensations which I feel in this upper world into which thou hast led me. On entering these hitherto unexplored regions, one ought to invent a new language which has never been used by human mouth, and we might say with Bacon: 'Such a love hath no equal.'

"Look into thy heart; listen to its hymn; alone it can reveal to thee what mine whispers in its inmost recesses. I have given thee my heart as a humble offering; question it as thou wilt, in future it can only please thee! I will stop, for I do not want to appear to thee like the most foppish of lovers. Ah! how I thirst to adore thee in body and in soul! I can only find two words, but they express my meaning: 'Come back!'

"I am all my queen's, and I embrace her.'

Gambetta's Letters

III

1875-1877

This is the most decisive period in Gambetta's life. It is a continual series of struggles and victories. On December 21st, the Assemblée Nationale is dissolved and henceforth Gambetta becomes the leader of the republican party, both during the senatorial elections and the elections for the Chamber of Deputies. Though the voting on January 30th, 1876, is very unfavourable to the republicans in the Senate, the vote of February 20th for the Chamber of Deputies justifies all their hopes and rewards their efforts. At the first balloting the republican party gains 300 votes against 135, at the second 56 against 49. M. Buffet, defeated in the four divisions for which he stands, withdraws and abandons the presidency of the Council to M. Dufaure. Gambetta is elected by Paris, Lille, Marseilles, and Bordeaux. In the new Chamber, he is the uncontested leader of the republican majority.

On April 5th, having been nominated president of the Budget Commission, he proves himself as firstrate a financier as he had been a talented organiser of the national defence. The Budget debate in 1877 is one of the most remarkable in our political history. Never have the taxes yielded so much, never has France been more

prosperous, with a budget of only three thousand millions to represent her credit and finances.

It seems as if the outside world gives a cry of admiration.

At this moment, in the columns of the *République Française*, Gambetta draws up the programme of the reforms desired; and, passing from the defensive to the offensive, he states the democracy's *desiderata*. Jules Simon is replaced by M. de Broglie, and the ghosts of the 24th of May and the Second Empire make one last effort in the parliamentary Coup d'Etat, May 16th, 1877.

We know all about the triumphant victory led by the 363 of whom Gambetta said: "We start with 363, we shall return with 400." The Duc de Broglie, during his four months' dictatorship, condemned Gambetta by default to three months' imprisonment and a fine of three thousand francs for having said: "When France makes her sovereign voice heard, one must either submit or resign." As ill luck would have it, on September 3rd, on the very eve of victory, M. Thiers dies, after having arranged with Gambetta all the details for the defeat of the monarchical party, and without being able to see the elections of October 14th, which marked the last stages in the triumph of a rational and earnest Republic.

Gambetta is elected in the 20th Arrondissement by 13,913 votes out of 15,720 voters and 18,586 registered electors.

After a final endeavour (lasting but a few days) on the part of Marshal MacMahon together with the Minister Rochebouet, M. Dufaure is at last invited to form a Cabinet, and the Republic is not only established by a regular Constitution but confirmed and recognised by the whole country.

The era of strife is over; in 1877 Gambetta enters the most dangerous epoch of his apotheosis. Here are his love letters reflecting the epic struggles and the final apotheosis just mentioned.

"March, 1876.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"The spring-time of thy life has come back again; never have I seen thee so gay, so calm, so sparkling, so enchanting; I am still quite intoxicated with happiness. I cannot express to thee what joy it was to me to feel myself so young again; to thee I owe my life's most delicious emotions; and what adorable repose I enjoy by thy side, what delightful peace! one feels carried away to dream and to enjoy, it is like drifting down a river and letting oneself be guided by the current.

"And when thou art free, thou will recover thy health again; we will hurry off together either to the land of sunshine or to the land of mists as best pleases thee, or first to Naples and then to Haarlem. By thy side I shall find new strength

and inspiration for the struggle. To thee I owe my greatest victories, and I feel in my heart that I can only finish and continue them under thy wing.

"All thine."

"May 5th, 1876.

"DEAR LITTLE ONE,

"In my turn I was enchanted by thy delicious reply; it was thy very self with all thy discreet, penetrating affection, and I even adore that modesty which makes thee anxious to keep in the background. Rest assured that never in my life has thy help been greater, more useful, more powerful, and that if I am victorious, I shall owe it entirely to thee.

"I see that thou also art taking to the Budget. I think I shall advise thee and keep thee informed as the prettiest and most distinguished of under-secretaries of State. Besides, this evening the Budget was a real nuisance to me. I went with the members of the Beaux-Arts Committee to see 'Dimitri' at the Théâtre Lyrique; but I could not stifle my yawns, and I left during the second act; this man surely does not love music.

"I adore and embrace thee."

"May 23rd, 1876.

"MY DEAR LOVED ONE,

"I really want to see thee, I cannot wait any longer; thou art my life, my intellectual and moral *Patria*, and I am homesick.

So, come to-morrow about five o'clock; I will be in the Rue Montaigne. I long to know thy opinion on what I did yesterday, on what I propose to do later on. I have grown so accustomed to consult my oracle that I cannot do without her, notwithstanding my growing unreasonableness. Besides, I am vain enough to think thou canst gain but strength and health from these meetings. And spring is coming too; the sun decidedly wants to return to us; we must think how we will employ our time.

"I have not relinquished the plan of taking thee next month to the south of Italy. So thou must invent some arrangement by which my longings and love of travel (fondly cherished, but never realised) may be satisfied."

"July 2nd, 1876.

"I want especially to tell thee what comfort I find in the remembrance of our love at these moments. To it I owe the preservation of my strength and composure. Love is my viaticum; if, thanks to it, I did not find in the depths of my heart the hope and confidence placed there by thy delicate hand, I should really be inclined to give all this troop of ungrateful idiots and fools the slip, and turn hermit somewhere. Thy divine and potent qualities have kept me to my duty, impelled me to act; and whenever I take new courage, I feel the strength and value of thy

affection. Life would be a lie, unworthy of living, without a companion in arms like my Léonie; and so I do more than merely love her; I obey her, and I mingle my love for her and for my country into one passion.

"I thank thee and adore thee in spirit and truth."

"July 29th, 1876.

"My Dear Idol,

"I would like to lay at thy feet all the treasures of this world to make thee an *ex-voto* worthy of thee and of the marvellous cure thou hast effected in thy devoted adorer. I quit this indescribable Odyssey,—too fleeting, alas! happy and free from all the worries which have been tormenting me for the last month. I know not if I am still dreaming; but I feel in and around me a promise of freedom and peace. I bless thee and I love thee as the sick man, miraculously healed, blesses and loves his fetich and his God. After all, art thou not my only religion and the unique support of my life?

"When I met thee for the first time, I never thought that the day would come when, disillusioned, I should find new happiness and the hope necessary to continue the struggle; I thought I only loved thee for myself; and see, all I desire and deserve comes from thee, is sustained by thy influence and realised by the confidence with which thou always inspirest me."

"Thou thoughtest fit, while surrendering thy tender, passionate heart to me, to keep thy cool head and thy courage. Thou canst now prove if thou art really superior to the rest of the world, and if my love is one which time and sorrow can change.

"I send thee my thanksgivings, my caresses and my prayers to be allowed to see thee again on Saturday. To-morrow I will tell thee all about both the morning and evening interviews; may thy spirit help and inspire me!

"I kiss thy forehead."

"October 26th, 1876.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"After thy departure sleep came, and with it dreams. I woke, however, very early, and I glanced at the sketch I had traced for thee of this troublesome speech. I feel cross and undecided; ideas abound; my head is crammed with expedients; but order and brevity are wanting; it looks as if I could do nothing away from the hot, close auditory. I seem only able to find commonplace topics, trite, indefinite expressions; I forsake my task and I trust to a momentary stroke of good luck. Come what may! I prefer to wait for my encounter with this monster duller, and even more fastidious than the monster at Varzin (Bismarck). What a profession it is! Before acting, I have to earn the right to make

reason and justice triumph while using apparently unnecessary violence. I must quiet this one's suspicions, checkmate that one's calumnies, and calm the other's fears—and deceive them all in order to serve them faithfully. Happily, my conscience tells me I could not have done better.

"Who decreed that truth should not walk the world naked? That most exacting of human characteristics, which will only consent to be commended or led when deceit or force is enlisted. But enough of this misanthropy! I come back to thee; I press thee in my arms; thy touch, even in imagination, gives me strength and courage.

"I adore thee, my sweet consoler, and I kneel at thy feet."

"November 22nd, 1876.

"If I had Pope's pen, I would write a little poem on the lost ear-ring, and, profiting by the occasion, I would reveal the secret of our love to all posterity. But alas! I can only repeat with the greatest of our teachers: 'I can neither read nor write, and am but a stranger in the midst of poets and painters.' It is really a pity, for I have seen and known sublime moments unsuspected by other mortals, and one must go back to prehistoric times to find goddesses gracious enough to converse with a mere man. The good Homer sleeps his everlasting sleep, and our

adventures cannot awaken him. Let us be content to live our poem; let it be our pride to love each other; let us mock posterity; it will know enough to envy us, though it cannot imitate us."

"January 27th, 1877.

"DEAR LOVE,

"No one knows the real intoxication caused by political triumph who has not already tasted it in love. This is the hour when one feels how divine is this ineffable sentiment. What am I saying? it is the one divine thing given to mankind to feel, to possess, and to bestow. Yesterday thou didst appear to me like the palpable, trembling incarnation of a beautiful ideal, and, in my most voluptuous transports, I felt an incorporeal flame purifying and illuminating my senses. What superior strength, courage, and power I draw from thee, as from an inexhaustible mine of mental riches! In the numerous struggles of my life I can spend freely without counting the savings and stores of my mind; by simply conversing with thee, I am sure to make good the loss. As the beautiful Galilean said: 'Thou art the fountain of life, my fair Samaritan.' The confidence with which thou inspirest me makes everything easy and propitious. Thou art therefore endowed with most noble attributes of goddesses; those whom thou protectest are invulnerable. Thou art my shield,

my guide; and when the prize is won thou wilt be my reward and my fortune.

"Dost thou feel how madly I love thee for thyself, for myself, for my ideas, my life's ambitions, for all that inflames me, rules, enamours, and attracts me? Others have loved but in one way; I, I love thee with all my faculties and for all thine which make thy person one of nature's masterpieces. Thou dost not know how adorable thou art, and that is thy only failing. Yesterday thou wast infinitely adorable; thus even is my love, infinite, limitless, only circumscribed by the limit of my own life.

"At thy knees."

"July 8th, 1877.

"My Dear Adored Little One,

"Thou art intoxicating, ideal; I am more adoring than ever, happier, more enraptured than I can say, to possess such a jewel. Nothing in my mind or heart can compare with thy affection. Thanks to it, I dwell in a heavenly sphere of ineffable love, insensible to the rest of the world, and I feel myself lifted above all its deceptions when leaning on thy heart. I see thee as I imagined thee, confiding, affectionate, gay, always mistress of thy reason and mine, in fact a woman, a true woman, she who was my reward, who could order my life, fill my soul, and

sanctify my victories. There, I will add no more; I feel powerless to express myself, to honour thee and to admire thee as thou deservest, and as I ardently long to do.

"All to thee, and for thee. I embrace thee."

IV

1878–1881

The period from 1878 to 1881 is truly one of the most beautiful in the history of the Republic.

Gambetta is in the zenith of that persuasive power of which he has hitherto been the only representative in the political world.

He is the uncontested leader of the republican majority, the firm supporter, as Reinach says, of a policy of national reconciliation. At Voltaire's centenary he says: "As for me, my mind is so broad that I can worship Jeanne la Lorraine and admire and follow Voltaire."

At Romans, at Grenoble (September 18th), and elsewhere, he traces with a masterly touch the democracy's programme.

In 1879 the triennial renewal of the Senate gives an important majority to the republican party.

It is thanks to Gambetta that this second Chamber has been established; he knew how to

convince the democracy of the necessity of a controlling assembly. At last MacMahon retires from the presidency, and Gambetta, without spite or mean intentions, tries to persuade Grévy to accept the post, refusing to take the first place for himself in the country's government. From 1879 to 1881, the real founder of the Republic is only President of the Chamber, and to this post he gives quite a personal style and character.

Here he meets all the politicians of the moment and that is enough for him. He continues unceasingly to pursue his ideal: the union of all Republicans and the Republic open to all France.

His fortune reaches its apogee with the return of the Chambers to Paris and the law of amnesty for all crimes committed by the Commune. The army acclaims him July 14th, 1879.

The Capitol is before him, but the Tarpeian rock is behind it.

The letters written to his friend during this period are still more passionate, and the last ones are full of the constantly repeated prayer that she will consent to consecrate his happiness definitely by marriage.

"Rome, January 1st, 1878.

"My Dear Idol,

"If ever the shortest absence caused by the most imperious reasons can seem pleasant,

it would certainly be to-day that I could consent to forgive it. What sweeter consolation could fate offer me for our separation (purely physical, for art thou not constantly present and visible to mine eyes?) than to begin a new year in Rome under the most favourable conditions, only a few days removed from a return big with promise, and to inaugurate this new career with thy warm wishes and thy magical words of love and hope? and we have so completely mingled our thoughts, our desires, our instincts and even our prejudices that I cannot experience an emotion or an impression without feeling that thou also dost experience it.

"However, I cannot prevent regretting the stimulus and the vivid reflections which thy presence would have brought to help me in my own task; I imagine that thou art present, but I cannot replace thee as easily as all that. I have done what I wanted to do; to-morrow I pay my last visits, I dine—the only dinner I have accepted—at our ambassador's, and then I shall be off to Nice. I shall remain there just long enough to embrace my numerous relations, and then I shall come back to Paris, to real civilisation, to the happiness and treasure of my life, to thee, my Léonie, whose face I cover with kisses.

"All thine."

"February 23rd, 1878.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"No, no, thou must always express thy opinion freely, I need it; thy opinion is the surest, the wisest censor of my own thoughts, and in the love which I dedicate to thee there has entered, ever since it existed, an increasing portion of reason and judgment. The boldest, and probably the greatest, enterprise in my whole career was born of thy inspiration and of thy clear intelligence. Everything which happens proves that thy judgment was right, and that I should have vainly searched elsewhere the way to make the reparation due to our unfortunate and noble country. . . . Do not forget that I shall have the whole of Monday free, and I beg thee to keep that day for me and to tell me the earliest hour when I can begin to enjoy it. Beloved little one, I expect thee without fail, and I kiss thy beautiful hands, and am for ever thy adoring."

"March 7th, 1878.

"DEAR LOVED LITTLE ONE,

"I am the disciple; thou art the master, and I do not want to change these sweet and fortifying relationships: the problems I have to solve are as numerous as they are complicated, and I have great need of insight. The whole of Saturday will hardly suffice to answer all my

questions; I mean thereby that thou must come very early.

"The Monster has begun to move again. I suspect he has no plan, and is as embarrassed as he is embarrassing, and that means much."

"March 11th, 1878.

"My dear Beloved Little One,

"Thou hast vanquished the last oppositions. It is done, we will go there with all sorts of precautions and leading-strings. This evening's reception was a triumph. I will tell thee on Wednesday about the presentation. I embrace thee with all my might."

"June 26th, 1878.

"My dear Beloved Soul,

"Thou art divine and I am the happiest of mortals ever honoured by a goddess' favours. I owe everything to thee, I ascribe everything to thee, and I will not allow thee for a moment to forget all the mental good which I derive from thy superiority in all matters. It is useless for thee to belittle thyself, to humiliate thyself; I shall always remind thee of thy real *rôle* and power.

"I feel I am conscious how I have altered since that unforgettable day, April 27th, and a feeling of grateful admiration mingles with the indissoluble love which binds our two existences,

making thy affection ever deeper and sweeter to me. Thus it is that I would have thee, that I love thee, thus that I require thee to think.

"I am prodigiously tired; I cough a little, notwithstanding the sunshine and mother Legay's delicious potions. I can only long for thy return, and I expect thee on Friday morning, to run about with me and to share my happiness.

"I embrace thee as I love thee."

"Ville d'Avray, July 28th, 1878.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"Thou hast been here and the whole place is illumined; my country-house seems radiant and scented with thy perfumes. I awake with a happy heart still palpitating with the emotions of the previous evening; I hastily rise and run about the woods looking for new spots for our next walks; laughing like a child, I think that to-morrow, Monday, I shall bring thee to my cottage, and I exult. How I love these pleasures, new to me, of solitude; this great beneficent silence, these admirable hiding-places in the woods, those calm sleepy pools at the foot of scented heaths, and above all the delight of collecting one's thoughts, thinking, meditating at one's leisure, without disturbance or brawlings from the outside world."

Gambetta's Letters

"September 14th, 1878.

"DEAR ADORED ONE,

"I wanted particularly to have thee with me this morning just at the very hour when we were first united. I kept the anniversary in the very inmost recesses of my heart. Ten years ago at that same hour I made my appearance on the world's stage. Then I possessed nothing; to-day nothing tempts me so much as to possess thee for ever. Thou art the richest prize, the most brilliant crown which fortune could award me; I enjoy my happiness to the full. It can no more change now than my wish to love thee till death can change. And I feel an ineffable pleasure when I hear thee say again and again: 'I love thee!' It is the cry of our heart, and I invest the rest of my life in that divine word.

"I love thee and I am always thine."

"September 20th, 1878.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"Adorable day! sublime ecstasy! I have never been happier or more proud in my life. I expect thee Friday evening without fail; come and fetch me at Versailles. To-morrow morning I am going to walk in the direction of Châtillon, close to the Verrières woods, to settle a little account with a certain native Périgord. It seems that this gentleman wants to see how I handle a pistol; his wish shall be gratified. Do

not be alarmed, the scene will be enacted quite close to thee, and thou art my guardian.

"I give thee the tenderest kiss in the world. All thine."

"*Telegram:* Met at Plessis-Piquet; no result, quite well, love, until to-morrow."

"September 21st, 1878.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"What pride and joy fill my heart! That was truly spoken like my proud, gentle companion to whom heroism costs nothing, for her character is naturally equal to all emergencies. That letter is worth more than a crown to me; it is a triumph in itself; I thank thee, I adore thee, and I keep an inviolable sanctuary in the inmost recesses of my heart for thee, who art the goddess of my career and existence. All went off well and to-morrow I will tell thee the details. I await thee always with impatience; to-day it is with frenzy. . . . Meanwhile I press thee in my arms and send thee my thanks for thy sublime and delicate sentiments.

"Till to-morrow, my noble wife."

"February 22nd, 1879.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE WIFE,

"Yesterday I tasted one of the noblest and sweetest mental pleasures in my life. I satisfied both heart and mind; I laid bare my

soul to thee, and thou wast able to read, writ in indelible characters, the sentiments of affection, love, respect, gratitude, and amorous ambition which were engraved there on the very first day by the hand of nature. I no longer oppose fate, I am certain that in future thou wilt be sheltered from doubt and despair. . . . Yes, dear child, I know thy wound; I would I could press my lips to its ever-bleeding edges and close it with my kisses. I thank thee heartily for the dignity and beauty which thou lendest daily to our tender caresses. It is ever thus I longed to love and to be loved. To meet such a woman, to sacrifice my life to her, to lay bare to her the inmost recesses of my soul, to penetrate into her heart's divine sanctuary, to be entirely master there, but ever ready to obey and to protect it: my ambition has been realised by thee and for thee, and this conquest has become my life's lucky star, the hidden cause of my good fortune; and I assure thee that I love thee more and more as everything rises round us. . . . "

"Friday night, May 23rd, 1879.
("Written near enough to send thee a kiss.)

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE WIFE,

"Hast thou ever before penetrated so deep into my heart as thou hast done to-day? and though the memory of our happiest meetings be still warm in our hearts, canst thou ever

remember a sweeter, more enchanting day? I am quite sure that to-day I possessed the full and perfect essence of thy nature. I lived thy life, not mine. I would gladly lose all sentiment of my personality to possess thine. My dream has come true, all is clear now, I breathe the same azure atmosphere in which thou dwellest, and I can cry with the prophet-king: 'I feel like a god and am indeed a god, for gods alone can bestow the gift of perfect love.' I sink myself in thy being for all eternity, and I wish for nothing better, nothing beyond this ineffable communion of souls. To thee, then, in thee and for thee."

"November 6th, 1879.

"DEAR IDEAL LITTLE ONE,

"Yesterday was a memorable day; I began to believe I was shaking thy determination on a subject which, for a long time, I have had at heart. I bless the day which brings me nearer to the realisation of my dearest wishes, and I hope, I hope."

"November 10th, 1879.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"Thou hast taught me the real definition of perfect happiness: a life composed entirely of days like yesterday. I desire ardently to renew these meetings and intellectual pleasures, and I shall not cease to repeat my prayers until they

are answered. Think well, dear wife, and come back one fine day with sparkling eyes and face illumined with joy (as I saw thee outlined against the dark shadow in the carriage) and tell me: 'Yes, I consent!' and we shall be happy."

V

1881–1882

The year 1881 brings much sorrow to Gambetta and to France. It is a year full of ingratitude and treachery.

As Reinach said: "New underhand intrigues began on the very morrow of the 14th July, when he was acclaimed by the assembly. The speech made by him during the Cherbourg *fêtes*, whither he had accompanied the President of the Republic, is mangled and shamefully used against him by a part of the press. In future they find fault with the most harmless words, and with deeds of which he is wholly innocent. At the same time he is frequently accused of protecting his friends, and of dictatorial designs. Not a day passes but he is insulted, slandered, denounced to the whole country as a Cæsar, eager for war or tyranny. After disdaining for a long time to reply to his insulters, he is at last obliged to leave the presidential chair and to repulse the attacks directed against him. His

visit to his native town, Cahors, described in the following letter, a visit during which he inaugurates a monument to the Garde Mobile of Lot, killed during the war, is cleverly transformed by the enemy's press into an insolent triumph. And yet at Cahors he made a brilliant eulogy on the President of the Republic; but he wishes to have the ballot list voted by the Senate, and combats M. Barodet's proposal to revise the Constitution. The Elysée then opposes the balloting list, and openly marches against the founder of the Republic and the President's chief elector."

The elections of 1881 are both a trial and a victory for Gambetta. A trial, because at Charonne he is received with furious outcries. He vigorously protests against "the silent servitude inaugurated by drunken slaves." For the first time, the people do not frantically applaud him; but, nevertheless, the result of the elections is a veritable victory for him. Four hundred and fifty-seven republican deputies are elected against ninety deputies of the Right.

The conspirators, however, do not give in. The Chamber meets October 26th, and the same day a majority, as imposing as incongruous, nominates Gambetta Provisional President. It then turns to the affairs of the day and to the Tunisian question, solely to induce him to accept the presidency; that is to say, to lift him up

still higher that his eventual fall may be all the greater.

Gambetta, who possesses more patriotic courage than any other man of his time, accepts bravely.

But the most important politicians desert him: Jules Ferry, Freycinet, the presidents and former presidents of the Council, who, later on, will form part of the "great ministry," give him the cold shoulder—him, the saviour of his country, the founder of the Republic! However, he is able to form the ministry of November 13th with young and active ministers.

Gambetta then begins openly to explain his ambitions. The Republic must cease to be "a little chapel only open to its old supporters: it must become a great edifice, open to all who rally round its institutions, and where civil and military men, whose services can be useful to the republican ministers, are admitted. The Republic must hold its national flag firmly before the foreigner, and its policy, though peaceable, must be a strong and noble one."

Cries are immediately raised that Gambetta wants to become a dictator. The leaders of the "campaign of fear" declare Gambetta anxious for war.

They demand the revision of the Constitution, and violently protest against the registration in this Constitution of the balloting list.

The storm breaks forth, the maddest accusations circulate among the people, the ministry's fall is decided. After a ministry lasting seventy-two days, on January 26th, 1882, Gambetta falls from his high position because he has kept faithful to the declaration made on the first day of his office: "Our policy will be the policy of France."

Saddened, wounded, profoundly disheartened, still trusting that history will do him justice, he resumes the direction of the *République Française* and leaves to his successor all the plans he had prepared during his ministry. His last cry is a protest against the surrender of Egypt, that "historical crime"; the trials increase and continue to beat ceaselessly down upon his head. He loses his beloved mother.

But his love, his last resource, still remains to him. His last letters during these two years of trial are like a gentle call to bind two hearts into an indissoluble and definite union.

If we compare these last letters with the first, written ten years previously, we shall find them even more eloquent, tender, and perfect.

Love is the only remedy for his sufferings; and these letters will make us hear, more clearly than ever, the despairing prayer of a wounded soul for a united life, an eternal union.

"January 30th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"I thank thee a thousand times; thy magnificent flowers astonished and charmed my guests, and all their praises went from my heart to thine, for I thanked thee for them in my mind. Thou knowest what my happiness needs just now: thy presence at these fêtes, and the good which thou wouldst know how to do. I shall always return to this subject, because at every moment of my life I remember it; and I hope by strength of will to obtain what I want. I shall come to the rue Bonaparte at three o'clock to fetch thee, and for ever if thou wilt; I cover thee with kisses."

"February 13th, 1881.

"ADORABLE LITTLE ONE,

"The weather may be less serene than our hearts, but we will find in ourselves what the heavens withhold. I am in haste to thank thee, to smother thee gently with my kisses, for the sweet letter which thou didst send me yesterday, and which I reread, my whole being trembling with love. Do not seek to express thy passion in more intricate or grander words; thou knowest the secret of saying everything and making everything understood. As to the supreme pledge of thy love, it is still easier to give; thou hast but to say one word, to make but one sign (it is true

before the mayor), 'tis short but heroic, and then we shall enter the Promised Land; dost thou understand: Promised? But good-bye till three o'clock.

"I kiss thy sweet hands."

"March 17th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED AND DESIRED LITTLE WIFE,

". . . I find thy sweet letter on my table like a smile of welcome. No, little one, this hand has waited, it would rather wither than unite itself to another hand than thine; be well assured of this: either it will remain disconsolately empty or it shall be thine. When wilt thou accept it? In future I shall end all my talks with that question whispered into thy ear.

"I kiss thy hands."

"March 17th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"We are now launched forth at full speed into the parliamentary unknown land. The places are taken, the orators chosen; I passed the evening drilling all my men; and to-morrow, walking with thee, my true, my only inspirer, I will consider my own *rôle*."

"Cahors, May 26th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"I send thee plenteous kisses from my lips and from the depths of my heart. My joy

would be quite ineffable if thou wert here, before my eyes, taking the share which belongs to thee in this victory. It is useless to describe it to thee; it is the fête of a foster-mother who finds her child grown to man's estate after a long separation of twenty years. I have never yet seen anything like it; the earth, the sky are propitious, and it is the most beautiful fête ever seen on earth. But all that cannot accustom me to thy absence."

"May 28th.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"I am worn out, harassed, and longing to be back in Paris and to find once more thy soul's calm, refreshing affection. All and always thine."

"May 28th.

"At last, one more hour, a distribution of prizes, a last ceremony, and we shall set out for the capital. I am coming back worn out and nearly voiceless, and I have great need to find the enchantress who reigns over my heart and whom I can never leave without feeling all my pleasure in life fade away. I embrace thee."

"Paris, August 3rd, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"Didst thou not feel, my beloved, when I was speaking of these compensations in

the orator's life, I was thinking chiefly of thy love's never-failing consolation which, even if fortune turned against me, it could not tear from me? It was the last challenge bursting forth from my soul, asserting louder than ever, that thou art the repose, the hope, the support of my whole life. No, nothing can ever come between us—I will not say to separate us,—but to make us waver. Long years ago I learnt to govern and understand myself; caprice and passing fancies have given place to an irrevocable, unchangeable devotion to thy heart. The world may crumble away beneath me; as long as I keep one spark of reason, one atom of strength, I shall feel always bound to the thrice-blessed woman who lifted me up and saved me from myself. I love thee with my brain, with my heart, with my senses, I love thee for eternity. Till Friday, for ever. I will send thee a few lines from Tours, a flower from the garden of France. 'The Joyous Land,' as Dante said."

"Tours, August 5th, 1881.

"Dear Adored Little One,

"I know not why, but it seems to me that I am less far from thee here than in any other town in France. . . . In thy conversation thou gavest such a golden tinge of poetry to Tours that I find thee everywhere, and that shortens and mitigates the separation."

"November 8th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED ANGEL,

"I have just received thy letter, and I reply before going to muse over my odious parliamentary combinations. Yes, it would be better at Zuppat or at Sorrento. There is still time. Wilt thou come and leave all these miserable creatures to tear each other comfortably to pieces? I am ready, and I will make *our* escape —one word, a yes, only yes, and we shall be free and that for ever. . . . Ah! little one, how I love thee and how I need to love thee! Thou alone bindest me to life; I am sick of everything else, and I cannot bear it much longer. Nature and its marvels would not suffice without thy sweet presence. I place myself at thy feet for the rest of my existence."

"November 9th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"At last we have freed ourselves from that interminable Tunisian affair; all ended fairly well about nine o'clock last night, thanks to the outburst of indignation which made me mount to the rostrum after eighteen successive votes on the affairs of the day, each one more senseless than the other. I felt I could no longer tolerate such servility on the part of Republican France before the whole of Europe, and so I interfered. In a few minutes I had made them ratify a policy

of action and national pride, and they replied by 397 votes. But by thus interfering I have pledged myself, and I must question the President of the Republic whether he is ready to submit to a dictatorship, for it exists in reality. I don't know what is going to happen, but I want to see thee, and I will come and fetch thee to-morrow about four o'clock. Then we will consider what line of conduct it will be best to choose. My good guardian angel, do not refuse me thy magical influence; I place myself under thy protection, I love thee as the light of my life. All and always thine. Thanks for thy long letter; it is an elixir which gives new courage, and I quaff it greedily."

"November 17th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"This time it is indeed to my wife that I feel I am writing; it cannot be possible that I have not softened thy heart and thy mind and vanquished thy too delicate objections. It is in thy power to retrace thy footsteps up the path of fate, to forget the past, to illumine my future and to make us for ever enviable. I am in haste to see thee again, and I look forward with pleasure to throwing myself at thy feet, to adore thee, dear idol, weeping over my involuntary roughness. I am ashamed, I am still overcome when I think of it. I know well enough that thy ineffable

clemency forgives me everything, and the inextinguishable passion I devote to thee makes me worthy of thy pardon."

"November 29th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"I only consent with great regret to put off thy visit until to-morrow, and if thou shouldst feel better, thou mightest still come and take me by surprise; I am still here, waiting for my sweet well-beloved. So thou hast passed a bad night? and the unspeakable good thou didst leave in my heart, the mental calm thou didst bring me, the hope with which thou didst inspire me, were not enough to chase away thy horrid fever? Thanks to thee, however, I once more found courage and peace of mind, if not my full bodily strength; so thou canst judge what an integral place thou hast in my life. In future I cannot act, think, live without the assurance that thou sharest in all I desire, plan, and seek after. I assure myself that thou feelest in the depths of thy penetrating and noble heart this indefectible passion which absorbs me, completely exalts me, and which, if thou wouldst consent, might be satisfied, and with it all my ambition. Take great care of thy delicate self, for my body and soul are dependent on thee; and never doubt that I do not love thee in every way at once. I mean that this love takes in me the place of all

other feelings — family affections, friendship, passion—all that the heart of man is accustomed to shower on many objects; and that on thy head I concentrate all my happiness. So good-bye until Wednesday, if thou art still ailing; if thou canst, good-bye until this evening, and thus every day. Kneeling, I kiss thy adorable hand."

"December 7th, 1881.

"DEAR SOUL,

"No, no matter how great thy anguish may be, it is not greater than my passion and affection. Thou must believe, thou must hope, thou must throw thyself into my arms and stay there. It is useless to gaze backwards and to look for stumbling-blocks or baffled hopes; all these morbid or legitimate lamentations cannot overcome my healing will; and the superhuman courage which thou hast shown thou canst devote, if thou wilt, to a new life. I will make thee worthy of thyself and of me, and thus everything will be made easy. Believe me, dear child, thou canst save us both, yes, save us; for without thee my empty, uncrowned life has neither value nor charm for me. I need thy divine presence, thy affection, still more than thou needest mine. Let thyself be persuaded; remember that nothing is lost when one has determined to save it; so trust thyself to a boundless love such as I have dedicated to thee. I love thee, I adore thee, and I

await thee. I have not been out, I have admitted no one, I have worked alone like a deserted creature; and I reply to thy letter by return.

"Exclusively and eternally thine."

"December 9th, 1881.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"Let thyself be persuaded by my vast soul; give thyself up to thy divine affection, and thus thou wilt vanquish the horrible fate which has pursued thee for so long. A new year is opening before us; we can still alter our destiny and fortune; we can completely suffice to each other. Thou hast emptied the cup of sorrow; I have personally tasted, calmly, without emotion, all the extremes of happiness, of what men call the joys of power and fame; but they are all as nothing to me without thee, without thy love, without thy presence, without thy revenge against an unjust fate. Let us begin the new era together; throw thyself on my heart and stay there; I am—I say it without pride—I am able and strong enough to re-make thy life, to make thee forget if thou wilt believe and listen to the man who loves thee and will love thee above all else in this world and in the next, if there is another. Come to my soul, I await thee; and if thou wilt, I will keep thee there for ever."

The Heart of Gambetta

1882

The year 1882, which is now beginning, is the last year in the life of the great patriot and the great lover as here revealed by us.

Let these admirable letters be read carefully. The swan is singing his last song. Never has Gambetta proved himself more noble in the strife, never has he been more tender, more affectionate.

"January 12th, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"The storm is gathering, the clouds grow heavy; I think the waterspout will burst over my head in a few days. I shall boldly put the question, I shall play double or quits. They must either pass through the Caudine Forks or I shall abandon them to their helpless impotence. I feel both freer and more resolute; fortune will decide. I shall still have my Little One, and she is all my life. I write to thee in the midst of the most terrific noise. The Council I held all this morning begins again to-night and to-morrow morning. I am going to the Chamber in a few moments. Nevertheless, I beg thee to meet me to-morrow at four o'clock. . . ."

"Paris, January 19th, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"The clouds are at last clearing away, and I face all my opponents. We shall fight in broad daylight. Of the thirty-three commissioners elected, six approve the government's plan, and yet what a fine battlefield they have just given up to me! Politics, texts, and constitutional laws, public or electoral rights, are no longer disputable in presence of this explosion of hate and stupidity; two supreme interests alone hang in the balance; will there be, yes or no, a government worthy of the name? I owe them my thanks for restoring and securing to it, at the commencement and during the crisis, all its former grandeur and importance; and I shall not fail to fulfil this sacred duty on the day of the public debate. I rejoice at the idea of engaging in a last splendid battle, and, no matter what happens, of having the chance to tell the truth to the country. And then, and then I shall sing with the Prophet Isaiah *Liberavi animam meam*, I have delivered, I have freed my life. Little One, believe me, it is with a glad heart that I go to this encounter, for if I conquer I shall hold them in my grasp; if I am conquered, I shall once more belong to myself, and this time I shall keep myself for ever for thee and for my dear schemes. I embrace thee as I love thee.

"I shall be with thee punctually at three

o'clock. It will be cold, so wrap thyself up well. We will go into the country."

"Nice, February 5, 1882.

". . . I swear to thee, there is no real pleasure away from thee; thou hast so filled my life that it is no longer full when thou art absent. Ah! Darling, I love thee exactly as thou wouldst have me love thee, completely, absolutely, *exclusively*. Ponder well on that last word, the only one expressing all my passion, and realise what such a confession means. . . . I press thee to my heart."

"Bordighera, February 6th, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"I have no more paper or pens, only a light pencil to trace the morning kiss which I send thee through space. Longing to find a little silence and repose, I have come to spend twenty-four hours here in the open country. When wilt thou call me back, and what day shall I be by the side of my good and beautiful enchantress in the soft nest she has lined for us two? . . ."

"San Remo, February 9th, 1882.

"DEAR BELOVED WIFE,

"Thy delightful letter reached me at San Remo, announcing the end of thy labours

and bringing me, with a kiss I can taste even from afar, a near future full of tender caresses. Ah! dear little one, how deeply hast thou entered into my soul! I no longer enjoy nature when thou art not by my side to share and to purify my liveliest impressions."

"Genoa, February 13th, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"What memories and yet what poignant regrets I feel in this spot! Here I walked with thee, adored, embraced thee; and thou art absent, and I feel too lonely in this great marble city which always seems to me like my cradle. I breathe more freely here than elsewhere, and I feel myself quite at home; its history comes back to me like a tradition of my own family. I give myself up to dream of the past, and I forget myself in the wonderful adventures of Christopher Columbus, the courageous naval cruises of the Dorias, the famous feats of arms of the Spinolas, the gilded extravagancies of the Doges; though a true Frenchman, I feel a hereditary regret to behold once more all the great witnesses of the fortunes of the proud Genoese Republic, a Republic where strength and dignity walked hand-in-hand with the liberty of the people. But enough of these dreams; one thing is quite certain, that is, that I cannot live away from my *dogaressa*, that I am going to retrace my steps

over the Alps to meet her again. Darling, good-bye till Wednesday; all thine for life."

"Genoa, February 14th, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"I leave Genoa in a few minutes, and I want to send thee a last note from this magnificent city. I have seen once more all the spots we visited together, that I might have the sweet pleasure of dreaming that thou wert still by my side, and find once more the sensations felt by one and the same heart. In this evocation of the past, there is an emotion both sweet and sad, like a reward for an affection still faithful, though separated from its object. I gladly leave, since it is the desire to have thee under my care again which brings me back to the soft nest prepared by thy hands. Ah! Little One, how I love thee, and how worthy art thou of my love! Far from thee, I can analyse at my leisure thy noble nature's divine qualities; and my eyes grow dim with tears when for the thousandth time I think how fortune favoured me when she placed thee in my path. In future, if thou wilt, we will never part again. We have both of us sufficiently weighed the world and its sham pleasures to know that the triumph of wisdom is to love, to prove our love, and to sacrifice to the only master worthy of our vows an undivided mutual affection. . . . All, allthine."

"February 28th, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED LITTLE ONE,

"I send my whole heart to my lovely helpmate and I resolve to give up my whole life to her, having no other ambition but to bring back the smile to her lips and happiness to her eyes. I feel (and it is my sweetest triumph) that the work is well started, and that by strength of passion and tenderness, I shall overcome the stupid fate which assails thy noble nature. Believe me, dear wife, I shall be stronger than fate, and we will secure our happiness in spite of everything. I leave thee to go and dine with Renan: thou understandest—with the Ecclesiast, quite an impromptu dinner. I know not how it is, but it seems to me that thou wilt be more really present to my mind with him than all alone in the rue Saint-Didier. At thy house tomorrow at two o'clock, and then to the Ville d'Avray. I kiss thy dear little slippers."

"April 9th, 1882.

"DEAR BLESSED WIFE,

"I do not want thee to awaken tomorrow morning without finding by thy bedside a little note filled with the expression of my affectionate gratitude for the hour of happiness, consolation, and unalterable hope which thou gavest me this evening. Courage, dear child, still a few more efforts and we shall issue forth

from the dismal valley wherein we grope and suffer, thou so cruelly, so long, so heroically. A simple meeting, lasting only a few minutes, raises me above myself and above life's miseries. Surely the strength which passes from thee to me must bring thee happiness and the promise of salvation. . . . I would like to make thee share the pride with which thou inspirest me, and to convince thee that never before has the world seen such grace, delicacy, and courage animate so frail a creature, and that the ineffable feeling of possessing such a treasure redoubles my enjoyment of life. Yes, dear soul, I love thee as the highest example of womanhood; and full of this ever present thought, I laugh at all the follies of fate; in thee I take refuge as in the garden of Eden; and thus I glory in life, since life is and remains the inevitable condition by which I am allowed to taste such noble pleasures.

"Thanks for ever, I cover thee with kisses."

"April 7th, 1882.

"CHÈRE MIA MOGLIE,

"I am never angry with my dear invalid; I am sad and I have a mad longing to weep over her hands, to heal her and to save her from the hateful fate which pursues her. It is not my fault if I cannot convince, persuade thee; I am vexed with myself because I do not succeed; but my futile endeavours only make me more

keenly desirous of recommencing only to stop when I have conquered. When I desist, I shall possess thee and prove to thee that it is always possible to remake one's life when there are two to do it, encouraging one another, adoring each other. My mind is so full of sad thoughts, I will say no more to-day. I will come to thee to-morrow night and we will talk about it all. I embrace thee with all my heart."

"July 6th, 1882.

". . . I think myself very worthless to steal away from real happiness and to sacrifice it to deceptive political glow-worms. However, I have accomplished a certain amount of rather useful work during the last two days; I persuaded the Commission of the Chamber to approve my scheme of military reorganisation, and by this last thread I keep tight hold of the interests of the country. I shall make my last attack and if I fail, I shall know how to resign myself and no longer weary my blind contemporaries with my schemes for national restoration. I have just received the news of the death of that good C——; we bury him Friday morning. In the evening we go to Ville d'Avray; I will come and fetch thee from the rue Bonaparte at five o'clock. Be very calm, my dear wife, I am by thy side, and when thou wilt, we will profit by the Civil Code either here or over the frontier as

best pleases thee. My heart and soul will never be satisfied until thou bearest the proper title conferred by the indissoluble union which unites us for ever. I kiss my wife's hands."

"Nice, July 22nd, 1882.

"DEAR ADORED WIFE,

"I send thee two words in haste, for I am somewhat overcome by the thousand details of the melancholy ceremony. . . . Alone, I am going to take my poor mother to her last resting-place, up there, overlooking the sea, under the sunshine and the flowers, close to my beloved aunt. Do not fear for me. I am mentally and physically as well as possible; thy strength is my strength, thy affection is my consolation, and thy heart is my refuge. I love thee, as my father says, like Donna and Madonna. Thine for ever."

"Aux Crêtes, September 21st, 1882.

"MY DEAR BELOVED WIFE,

"I suppose thou art already settled at Ville d'Avray, that thou wilt stay there during our fortnight's separation, that thou wilt superintend the proper execution of the works, and that thou wilt be, as is seemly, the mistress of the house, thus rehearsing the *rôle* which awaits thee as soon as possible. I am both saddened and rather vain of the laments caused by thy departure. I feel so well the sincerity of thy sorrow. I find thy

whole palpitating soul so well expressed in the heart-broken lines that, though I pity thee, I am secretly wickedly glad to be so exceedingly and exclusively loved. I am not content to be vain only of that. I am more and more sure of my happiness. I rejoice at having so well chosen my companion, and I am in haste to meet her on whom depends all my life's gladness, my heart's peace, and the ineffable joy of possessing an inestimable treasure from which nothing ever again can separate me. I return thee that magnificent page by Balzac with the remark that it is true of us both, for us both; and that it is this very perfect harmony of our two souls (which he was not able to possess or attain) which makes our divine communion inaccessible to others.

"I embrace thee as I love thee, immeasurably, eternally.

"LÉON GAMBETTA."

THE COMMON TASK

X

THE COMMON TASK

IN writing these lines my object is not a political one. As I have said, it is Gambetta's heart I wish to reveal to my contemporaries. But, as the great orator's letters prove, there was between him and her whom he had chosen, not only as his wife but as his assistant in his political task, such a similitude, such a continual exchange of ideas that it is impossible not to detect those actions which were prompted by his companion's influence over his quick, yet cautious, mind.

First of all, it is beyond doubt that in the very beginning of his political career, Gambetta, having met in his path an independent mind clear-sighted in religious matters, abandoned for ever the vulgarities to which, owing to his plebeian tendencies and his circle of rather common-place acquaintances, he was inclined. The admirable portrait drawn by him of the country curé in his speech at Saint-Quentin, his exposition of the grandeur of a free Religion in a free State, will be the first fruits of the influence of a prudent

and conservative friendship upon this headlong, pioneer-like mind. In future Gambetta, though by no means modifying his opinions, will show more caution in his relations with the Church, a caution no one would have suspected possible in the student of the Latin quarter, or in the boisterous lawyer of 1869.

From 1871–72 the statesman, aided by his unequalled charm and shrewdness, steps forward and asserts himself.

Later, in the zenith of his power, at Leo XIII.'s accession, we shall see this woman, apparently almost as cool and collected as a diplomatist, sent by him on a secret mission to the Pope.

Therefore it is absolutely certain that in religious matters the feminine influence over this essentially gifted and revolutionary nature was considerable; and we are going to prove that if Gambetta had lived, the separation of the Churches from the State as imagined by him would have still been effected, but on other and more solid and equitable foundations than those on which it now exists. His friend's influence on the orator's mind is just as marked in political matters.

In 1871, as we know, the parties are divided. The three groups of the Left and the three Monarchical parties are face to face. Remember this noble woman's words at Versailles. It is

she who extols this Republican union which is to serve as the basis for everything.

She says: "Let me tell you something different from the cry of the public which loves clap-trap episodes and heroic attitudes. Be more and more persuasive. Offend no one. Keep, if you wish, to the neutral ground of principles, try to inaugurate a policy of results. Let the country feel that the old political parties might possibly be adapted to a new form of government. Hold out hopes of a practical and novel solution still unformed, but let them feel that you and you alone can give them this solution. For, at the present moment, one man alone hopes, one man alone sees, in the July elections which have just taken place, signs of the country's awakening; alone he plans to group all the democratic forces into one union, that thus he may bind the country together."

Certainly Gambetta, with the reputation for patriotism which he enjoys both in his own country and in the whole world, can afford to remain on the Aventine hill of democracy, covering himself in his unbending incorruptibility and in his patriotism for Alsace-Lorraine. He can afford to wait during long years for the development, in future inevitable, of the republican scheme while still remaining a radical, socialist, and even a revolutionist in the best sense of the word. It is in reality his natural temperament.

The Heart of Gambetta

It is always easy to disagree with every one in politics. In our days we have a famous example.

Now, from the beginning Gambetta makes his choice. He will be a member of the government, he will negotiate with the divers interests which move across the political stage on the morrow of a conclusion of peace. From this chaos he will produce order, union, and a republican organisation. The undoubted inspirer of this "policy of results" and "opportunism" is his patriotic and devoted friend. Every one must know that. Who can say to-day what would have become of France, if Gambetta, by a continuous effort of his clear and flexible will, had not kneaded in his strong hand all the incongruous and incoherent interests of the republican party?

This hand of Gambetta's held out alike to Thiers, Charrette, Louis Blanc, Grévy, and Victor Hugo, has done more for republican and liberal France than all the speeches made by the admirable theorists and orators of 1848. With them we should never have succeeded; we should have recommenced 1849, we should never have established an order of things which, notwithstanding its imperfections, in a few years' time will have existed for fifty years. What all the actors in the great historical drama of 1871–1875 do not see is that, side by side with Gambetta's broad

far-reaching hand is extended also a woman's little delicate-gloved hand, softening and refining the man's vigorous hand-clasp and thereby doubling its cordiality and value.

I should like to allude to a still more delicate subject. A report concerning Gambetta's want of education in worldly matters has been much distorted. The rowdy bohemian student, the bock-drinker of the Latin quarter, the bearded excitable socialist, the patriot ever ready with inflammatory speeches, is criticised by every one in 1871. The stern Grévy, the unctuous Jules Simon (to whom Dupanloup laughingly says: "You will be a cardinal before me"), wring their hands in despair, thinking of the day when perhaps this "furious fool" may climb up to power again.

They consider him a talented peasant escaped from the Périgord mountains.

And indeed, his mother Orasie cannot teach him all the effeminate refinements unknown to the rough champions of the wars of religion. She is an honest woman of the Revolution, single-minded, tender, thoroughly upright and sensible, but she is not a woman of the world. Nor is the good Tata Massabie who keeps house for Gambetta, and declares to every one in her sonorous southern accent: "Léon is not sensible, he will *end by putting me out.*"

No, it is not that worthy aunt who has taught

him how to receive his guests at the Palais Bourbon, as no one had received at the Presidency of the Republic for thirty years. They say: "cherchez la femme" in all important matters. Well! the woman in this important matter of the organisation of the French Republican party is "She."

It is this refined nature, faithful to the social tradition of the Second Empire, a tradition whose morals one may criticise, but which, no matter what one says, has somehow inherited indirectly the stately manners of the eighteenth century; it is this beautiful woman, careful of her person, somewhat haughty, sometimes icy in her manner with strangers, tender and only unrestrained with him she loves, who gives to the noisy Gambetta of 1869 some idea of the polite world, and the power which he can exercise in a democracy.

If Gambetta bewitched Monsieur Thiers, if little by little this charmer tamed the fierce republicans, it was because he was supported by this enchanting treasure of grace, elegance, and good taste.

If in ten years he was able to make the French Republic appear pleasing and attractive as regards the Arts, the Sciences, the Army, and the Treasury, we owe it to this exquisite and hidden feminine influence. This influence was like an invisible solder uniting the Second Empire to the Third Republic.

In order to realise the efficacy and importance of this secret co-operation in the elaboration of the chief features of our national history, we must remember the different occasions on which Gambetta declares his confidence in his companion's judgment. In 1875, after the vote of the Constitution which established the Republic, after this great work accomplished together, he writes to her:

"Thou art ever my clear-sighted, steadfast counsellor; no matter how highly, no matter how deeply I analyse my life's circumstances, since fate united us, I see thee always inspiring my best deeds, wisely guiding my actions; and I love thee as the Greeks must have once loved their household goddess Minerva.

"What faults hast thou not helped me to avoid! how often hast thou not put kind words into my mouth! what fits of impatience and anger hast thou not warded off! I bless thee in my heart for all thy good influence over me. How could I ever fail in my devotion to thee? Thou whom I know to be the very essence of my actions and the better part of my reason. To lessen my love for thee would be to disown myself, and to renounce everything after which I seek.

"I even adore that feeling of modesty which makes thee apparently wish to keep in the background. Be well assured that never has thy

help in my life been greater, more useful, more powerful; and that if I win the battle, I shall owe it to thee."

On May 23, 1876, just after the Coup d'État of the 16th May, he writes:

"I long to know thy opinion on what I did yesterday, on what I propose to do later on. I have grown so accustomed to consult my oracle, that I cannot do without her, notwithstanding my growing unreasonableness. My love has acquired a certain amount of fetichism, which will have to be endured, no matter how exacting I may become."

The plans for the admirable political campaigns, of which I have spoken, are always drawn up after their interviews.

Gambetta, with extraordinary discernment, explains how useful this shrewd intelligent woman's co-operation was to him.

"When I met thee for the first time, I never thought that the day would come when, disillusioned, I should find new happiness, and the hope necessary to continue the struggle; I thought I only loved thee for myself; and see! All I desire and deserve comes from thee, is sustained by thy influence, and realised by the confidence with which thou always inspirest me.

"Thou thoughtest fit, while surrendering thy tender, passionate heart to me, to keep thy cool head and thy courage. Thou canst now prove if

thou art really superior to the rest of the world, and if my love is one which time and sorrow can change."

In the most important affairs he consults her; at the time of the Conference of Berlin, he writes to her (March 6th, 1878): "I lay down my arms before the wise Minerva; thy last words quite vanquished whatever hesitation still remained, and if they meet in Berlin under the Presidency of the 'Monster,' I shall have to go, especially if the invitation comes from him. I spent the evening with our minister, and, on my return, I found this marvellous and decisive missive; I have made up my mind, and I am going to prepare my notes in which I shall defend the love of action which thou hast so vigorously expressed. Those terrible words, cowardice and aggression, express everything, and I am going to prove to thee how right thou art."

Even at the height of his success he does not neglect his oracle.

"March 7th, 1878.

"I am the disciple, thou art the master, and I do not want to change these sweet and fortifying relationships; the problems which I have to solve are as numerous as they are complicated, and I have great need of insight."

On May 24th, 1878, after that *fête* which the

Republic can never forget, he writes her the letter in which their whole task is summed up:

"May 24th, 1878, what an anniversary!

"What a star thy love hath placed on my forehead, and what a stream of supreme inspiration flows from thy lips! To thee I owe the happiness, strength, and joy which make me vibrate to-night.

"I bring thee the applause with which my speech was received. It has been a significant and glorious day; we lifted up our young Republic on the people's shield. She is now loved, admired, and respected. I know well that one must not trust too blindly to good fortune, she is often unsteady and whimsical; but all these representatives of the world, who sat at our table, will take home with them the echo of my words, the impressions of justice and progress which they received, and thus the cause of Republican France will be strengthened, acclaimed, blessed.

"The presence of our ministers and of all the politicians, of the two chambers and of the press, at this national *fête*, marks the high character of the solidarity which unites the republican majority and the Power. I am counting on a grand impression on the country to which will accrue all the honour of the success won by our magnificent enterprise. Abroad, many will be content; and by keeping friends with all the world, we shall be able to stay independent.

"Come! Our business prospers, and Minerva can be proud; Athens will erect altars to her if Athens, by recovering her former splendour, can recover her virtue: gratitude."

Alas! Athens has erected no altars. Athens has recovered her former splendour, but not her virtue; and after thirty years an unknown friend is obliged to remind the country both of its debt and of its ingratitude!

Yes, I hope that after having shown, as I have just done, that the Friend of Gambetta is inseparable from his political and social work, and how both loved and served France, that Athens will show some gratitude, and join with me in what I ask for at the end of this book.

However, the history of their common task is not yet finished; here is one of its principal features.

LÉON GAMBETTA, LEO XIII., AND THE SEPARATION

XI

LÉON GAMBETTA, LEO XIII., AND THE SEPARATION

ON February 20, 1878, Gambetta writes to his friend:

"To-day will be a great day; Berlin has made peace, and perhaps reconciliation, with the Vatican. They have nominated the new pope; he is the refined and elegant Cardinal Pecci, bishop of Perugia, whom the jealous old Pius IX. on his death-bed tried to deprive of the tiara by making him Chamberlain. This Italian, more diplomatist than priest, has passed through all the intrigues of the Jesuits and the exotic clergy: he is Pope, and I augur great things from the name of Leo XIII. which he has taken. I welcome this very promising accession. He will not openly break with the old traditions and declarations of his predecessor; but his conduct, his actions, and his alliances will have more weight than formal pronouncements; and if he does not die prematurely, we may hope

for a marriage between Prudence and the Church."

And on the morrow he writes again:

"I am infinitely grateful to the new pope for the name he has dared to take; he is a 'consecrated opportunist.'

"*Shall we be able to treat with him?*

"As the Italians say, *Chi lo sa?*"

What a sure and just judgment is shown in these few lines concerning the new-comer, who as yet has hardly appeared on the scene! What services a statesman capable of such prescience can render his country if he be listened to!

We see that the accession of Leo XIII., the sovereign pontiff, "more diplomatist than priest," inspires Gambetta with the plan of negotiating with the Vatican a new *modus vivendi* for France.

Gambetta, with an infinite knowledge of the art of negotiating (merely informal negotiating, for he has no power in the State affairs), is going, in fact, to begin certain negotiations which we here reveal for the first time. And he will succeed, thanks to his friend, who is most qualified to bring about an interview in the strictest secrecy in Rome, where she already has many friends. It is really a wonderful stroke of genius which prompts Gambetta thus to employ as his medium to converse with the formidable Roman world this marvellously intelligent woman, who will certainly compromise no one, who will do everything

with tact, and inspire complete confidence: first, because she is religious; then, because she is well acquainted with the clerical world (her former director having been one of the Church's luminaries); and lastly, because this Roman society is perhaps most aware of her *liaison* with Gambetta (though it has been kept no secret), as well as of the high esteem in which he holds her judgment.

Besides, since Gambetta has earned the Republican party's complete confidence, he feels himself obliged to ascertain personally what is going on abroad. He cannot ask the "puppets who parade up and down in the different chancellors' hôtels under the fallacious pretext of representing France, and thereby doing an ill turn to the Republic," to give him trusty information, which, besides, would be refused by any of the functionaries of the 16th May.

He can get all the information he may require on home affairs. But abroad, he can only follow the events of the day with difficulty and trouble. His duel with the man whom he calls in his letters "the Monster," Bismarck, is an unequal duel. One adversary has all Europe in his hand; Gambetta has only his protest against the tearing away of Alsace and Lorraine, only his great, splendid phrase, "Let us always think, but let us never talk, about it!" only his avenging cry, "History will excuse justice."

But Bismarck recognises a worthy adversary

in Gambetta, he treats him with visible caution, and a friend, Monsieur C., to whom the great orator alludes in his letters, is his secret representative in Berlin. Thanks to him, though it may seem very improbable, he can communicate with Bismarck.

In short, in Rome, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and London, Gambetta possesses quite a staff of trustworthy informants who keep him constantly advised of all that is going on in Europe.

In Rome he is going to make use of his friend's marvellous intelligence; and as he talks with Bismarck, so he will talk with Leo XIII.

But what sort of a man was the new pope?

To-day we can safely answer.

He was a talented pope, with a fine brilliant intelligence; and with singular perspicacity Gambetta realised these facts from the very first.

Gambetta knows that Joachim Vincent Pecci, whose family can trace its origin back to the eighth century, is a man of the old stamp. He is remarkably learned in all subjects: Latinity, Versification, Chemistry, Physics, Philosophy, Theology. In his way he is an encyclopædist, an encyclopædist with "his face turned towards God;" he is very accessible, possessing the charm and broad mind which always belong to those who have a wide outlook upon human knowledge. Gambetta also is an encyclopædist with

"his face turned towards his Native Land." They are made to understand each other.

Pecci, the Governor of Perugia; the Delegate sent by order of Gregory XVI. to fight and suppress the robberies in Benevento; the Archbishop of Damietta; the Nuncio at Brussels; the dear special friend of Leopold I., and lastly the Cardinal who refuses to pay homage to Victor Emmanuel the Conqueror, in January, 1869,—Pecci the Churchman is above all a man of deeds.

When he attains to the sovereignty, "he dares," says Gambetta, to take the name of Leo XIII., thus recalling the name of Leo XII. who, when he was Pius VII.'s vicar, opposed the election of the Jesuit's chief and put such difficulties in their way that their constitution and order were near being abolished—Leo XII., who approved Martignac's ordinance in France, by which the members of non-authorised congregations were forbidden to direct the secondary schools, thus making the seminaries dependent on the university, and limiting the number of scholars.

Like his predecessor, Leo XIII. wants the clergy not only to be disciplined, but (strange to say) to be educated. He personally presides over the Academy of Saint Thomas Aquinas founded by him, and there he repeats his charges concerning "the Church and Civilisation." At the Vatican Council he votes the Papal Infallibility

without uttering a single word, he who is usually so voluble.

Active, and impulsive as a pope may venture to be, Leo XIII. propounds his dearest doctrines: "those political doctrines which would be the salvation of society if they were only observed." He modifies the Congregation of Studies and gives it the direction of Catholic instruction in all countries. He looks for, receives, stimulates, counsels, encourages the men of letters and the journalists, even the reporters, who are ready to serve the Church in any way.

In his encyclical letter, *Immortale Dei*, he expresses the following revolutionary sentiment: "All is of God, but supreme authority is not necessarily obliged to keep to one political form; it can very well adapt itself to this or that form, provided it be indeed of use to the public in general."

It is a republican doctrine couched in cautious, religious, but withal plain terms. This gifted pope feels that the various governments of the world are all becoming democratic and collective. Is not the Church itself a divine Republic electing its own chief?

And Leo XIII., the purist, thus defines the Church's *rôle* in the world:

"In human affairs everything which is in any way sacred, everything concerning the soul's salvation and the worship of God, either by

its nature or its object, is under the Church's authority."

Does he not thus wonderfully and implicitly determine the very limits of civil power admitted by all republicans ?

This pope, with his absolute power, becomes even tolerant when he says: "The Church, though only recognising what is true and upright, does not, however, oppose the tolerance which public power thinks necessary to use concerning certain matters contrary to truth and justice, when by so doing it can avoid a greater evil or can obtain something better and more valuable. With true maternal foresight the Church allows for the overwhelming burden of human infirmities, and she is not ignorant of the movement which in our time is sweeping minds and things along with it."

What shrewd and prophetic words, to-day alas, quite slighted.

Later in his Brief of 1892, he will recommend the clergy to respect the French Government, and in remarkably happy terms he will declare "that the form of government results from the combination of historical and natural circumstances. Every one must respect these governments and refrain from trying in any way to overthrow them or change their form."

With his consent Cardinal Lavigerie, the immortal restorer of the African Church (he

whom Gambetta had in mind when he said "Anti-clericalism is not an article for export"), proposes at the lunch given by him to the French fleet, a toast to "the union of all parties for the good of our country, no matter what form of government rules under the shadow of the national flag."

This, then, is the reigning spirit in the Church at the time when Gambetta is all powerful in France. It would have been strange if he had not conceived the idea of profiting by this unhoped-for circumstance to try to perform, with the least pain possible, the inevitable operation of which he is the avowed partisan: the Separation of the Churches from the State.

It was said then, and will still be said, that it is a fatal mistake to negotiate with the Vatican, for it is only inviting failure.

We will reply: "not with an intelligent Pope like Leo XIII." And we shall prove this fact by what we are going to reveal, that Gambetta was quite as shrewd a diplomatist as Leo XIII., and that he would have brought about the separation under conditions less brutal and less dangerous to the future than those we have realised to-day.

We wished to recall these facts that we might show what a crime the Republicans committed when they persecuted and worried to death, by

accusing him of dictatorship, the man whose political programme we have finally realised, slowly and painfully after more than twenty years, and whose valuable co-operation we might have enjoyed.

The diplomatic operation as directed by Gambetta and his friend, skilfully begins with the speeches made at Romans and at Grenoble.

Gambetta says: "We must stand firm on our own debating-ground, which is: *War against Clericalism.* Leo XIII. is not a clerical, but a refined, elegant man; we must bring him face to face with a firm will, with a straightforward and irrevocable programme: that of the Separation of the Churches from the State in France, made courteously, considerately, like a divorce between fashionable people."

And the speech at Romans, "Clericalism is the enemy," cannot be misinterpreted, its broad outlines are so definite. All Gambetta's efforts are directed against the domination of the Jesuits; he leaves genuine religion in the background.

It is amusing to think that the speech made at Romans in September, 1878, should be aimed at Leo XII. the anti-Jesuit, and at Leo XIII. the liberal, but it is especially directed at the latter, that it might form the basis for future negotiations.

Let us listen to the speech which perhaps we do not remember often enough.

". . . The State must keep outside the domain of conscience. Nevertheless, we cannot abstain from the search for a solution, or at least the path to a solution, of our relations with the Church. I know well that if I want to be quite correct I ought to say the Churches; but if I do not say the Churches, it is because, as you know, I am very hurried. Now, we must always do justice to the spirit which animates the other Churches; and if we have to face a clerical problem, neither the Protestants nor the Jews have any part in it; the battle is fomented solely by the ultramontane agents. When we consider the problem from a governmental point of view, from a public point of view, or from a rational point of view; when we examine the encroachments and the incessant usurpations made by the Clerical party, so efficiently aided by its four hundred thousand faithful, exclusive of its secular clergy, I feel I have the right to say, while designating these masters in the art of making dupes who talk of a social danger: 'there is the social danger!' And do you know what well-weighed reflections inspired me with this antagonism? I will tell you: It is that this French State of which I have been just speaking is systematically being undermined, and each day a new breach is made in the edifice. Yesterday it was the mortmain, to-day it is education. In 1849 it was Primary Education; in 1850 it was

Secondary Education; in 1876 it was Higher Education. Sometimes it is the army; sometimes it is public education; sometimes it is the recruiting of our sailors. Wherever the Jesuitical spirit creeps in, the Clericals spread and quickly aim at domination, because they are not people who easily relinquish a task once begun. When the thunder growls, they make themselves very small; and their history has one marked feature, which is: *that whenever the national prestige sinks there is a corresponding rise in Jesuit influence!* Well, sirs, do you know what the partisans of ultramontanism say? They say that we are the enemies of all religion, of all liberty of conscience, that we are persecutors, that we thirst to martyr them; and if I protest here, it is not without a feeling of shame at having to notice such absurdities, but the baseness of my adversaries obliges me to do so, and I must resign myself.

"We are not the enemies of any religion. On the contrary, we are the servants of liberty of conscience, respectful of all religious and philosophical opinions. I consider no one has the right to choose, in the name of the State, between one religion and another, between two opinions on the origin of the universe or on the final end of life. I consider no one has the right to interfere with my philosophy or my idolatry: one or the other are only dependent on my reason

or on my conscience; I have the right to use my reason and to make it serve me as a torch to guide me after centuries of ignorance, or to let myself be lulled to sleep by the myths of childish religions.

"I only interpret the private opinion of the French people when I say of clericalism what my friend Peyrat once said: '*Clericalism is the enemy.*'"

In short, Gambetta's speech at Grenoble, together with his speech at Romans, defines minutely solemn promises which he wishes to make to the French people, so that these same promises may serve as the starting-point in his courteous duel with the Vatican.

LÉON GAMBETTA, LEO XIII., AND LÉONIE LÉON

XII

LÉON GAMBETTA, LEO XIII., AND LÉONIE LÉON

HAVING done this, towards the end of the year 1879, after having refused to become President of the Republic, after having contributed enormously to the election of Jules Grévy, after being nominated President of the Chamber, the man most qualified in France to begin negotiations with the Vatican determines to send his other self to Rome.

We have no document which can tell us what were the terms of that secret mission intrusted to his friend. Besides, there could be no notes or protocols on such a subject; but we know the substance of the preliminary instructions given by Gambetta.

"Thou must tell the pope himself, if thou canst obtain an audience, first that my promises and opinions given and expressed at Romans and Grenoble are positive, and that we can no longer

adjourn a complete study of the revision of the Concordat, conducted in such a manner that it will free the Church and State from engagements which are no longer of any use.

"Remind him that Napoleon said to his confidant Montholon, alluding to the real object of his treaty with the Head of the Catholic Church: 'Get the clergy to accept the new order of things and thus break the last thread connecting the old dynasty to the country.

"Our object is no longer the same. We no longer fear any dynasty, and we are no longer desirous of getting the clergy to accept the new order of things. We no longer desire to share our influence with the Church, we desire simply to have liberty, true, lawful, and noble liberty, both for the Church and for ourselves.

"We no longer live in the times when Pope Pius VII., Cardinal Chiaramonte, the signer of the Concordat of 1802, was anxious to re-establish his authority in France, and to put a stop to the national Church's ambition formed and already partly realised by the constitutional bishops after Thermidor. No, the Church is now obeyed and respected under the Republic as she never has been before; and we by no means wish to undermine—say that and repeat it—the spiritual authority; we only wish for independence in civil and lay matters as wide and as complete, for instance, as the principals of our Revolution

demanded it to be. In short, what we wish is not a victory like that obtained by Napoleon over the Holy See, July 15, 1801, but a treaty of peace between two free and equal powers. Tell him that if he accepts these preliminary conditions we will enter into the details for their execution."

We must confess that the first overtures on this subject, entirely one of principles, are not received very enthusiastically at the Vatican. A cardinal, cleverly chosen to serve as a medium, wishes to limit the conversation merely to an exchange of views between Madame L—— and an under-secretary of state, very intelligent no doubt, but not sufficiently qualified.

Madame L——, too shrewd to let herself be caught in such a trap, leaves, apparently quite indifferent to the question mooted by her, as she says, entirely in the Church's interest and in order confidentially to reveal Gambetta's real inclinations.

She knows her audience well, for a little time afterwards she learns that Leo XIII. is willing to grant her the much-desired interview.

She is received by the Sovereign Pontiff, explains Gambetta's designs to him with a calm coolness and purposely measured voice which appear to delight the Holy Father. Leo XIII. is too much of a diplomatist to say anything which might not only bind him, but make people think that he approves Gambetta's designs. He

listens, smiles, and contents himself with praising the great orator, calling to mind that Gambetta is *mezzo Italiano* and speaking of the public man's duties: "The shepherd of the people should always walk hand-in-hand with the shepherd of souls." Nevertheless, he says one word which, recorded in a letter written the very same day by Madame L——, indicates a half-result:

"DEAR, DEAR,

"Moderate result, perfect interview, great condescension. The 'Master' (as she calls the Pope) sings the great orator's praises. It is not all blarney. At the end of the interview he says with a sigh: 'Yes, I should like to see the French prelates and priests no longer in the hands of the government like consecrated *carabinieri* (consecrated gendarmes) governed and paid by the civil power.'

"What offends him is the first Article of the Concordat, by which the exercise of the Catholic religion is subjected to the police rules which the government thinks necessary to the public peace; but it is especially the question of money which worries him, for the yield from Saint Peter's Pence becomes less every day, and the suppression of the Church funds must be counterbalanced by advantages which will render the Church absolutely independent of the State, and of the faithful, in money matters."

In short, the Church is willing to be independent, but she does not wish to become a pauper.

"If I were obliged," adds the shrewd feminine diplomatist, "to express my opinion, I should be inclined to say, not without blushing a little at such an opinion: 'It is a question of money.' But what will I not do for my great friend?"

Gambetta, on the contrary, is very pleased with this apparently mediocre result. He writes: "If it is a question of money, France is rich enough to pay for a definite agreement.

"As to placing the French clergy out of reach of the common law, that idea cannot be entertained for a moment; we must be inflexible on that subject."

And he writes to his friend to tell her to couch the second question in clearer, preciser terms.

She writes: "Seeing that the *statu quo* can no longer exist in France as far as concerns the Concordat, will you simply denounce it or will you have it revised?"

The reply is quick in coming: "If we are obliged to move in the matter, we will have the contract of 1802 revised."

Nearly a year passes; and, except for this reply that they will accept the revision only because they are obliged to do so with many pecuniary compensations, the Holy See remains dumb.

An event entirely unexpected but provoked by Gambetta, the shrewd diplomatist, is needed to make the Roman Curia awaken out of its impassibility. A rumour suddenly spreads that Gambetta favours a schism: that is to say, a Gallican Church with Father Hyacinthe and other well-known dissenting priests at the head of this new free church.

This well-directed blow has a magical effect, and negotiations begin with renewed ardour.

Do they ever really come to anything? We cannot say for certain how far they progress, but as far as we can judge by certain information given to us, they were on the high-road to success.

The first article of the Concordat was to be kept; that is to say, the Catholic religion was to remain subject to the police regulations constituting the common law. The second article, as well as the articles 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, were to be suppressed: that is to say, the archbishoprics were to be considered sacred property. The State is no longer to interfere in the nomination of bishops. They can remodel the parishes in their diocese, and nominate the incumbents, without the approbation of civil power. This means complete liberty in the spiritual domain left to the Holy See, but it also means subordination to the country's laws accepted by the clergy peaceably and of their own free will.

The remainder of the agreement is devoted to unimportant clauses. An annuity is to be granted to all the representatives of religion, an annuity equal to two-thirds of the salary allowed by the signing of the Convention. The dioceses are allowed the use of all religious buildings, perpetually, gratuitously. The law concerning the Church revenues is not materially altered, but the State and the commune can only interfere in the administration of the property of religious buildings without usufruct, and see that they are kept in repair.

The means by which the dioceses can buy this right to property without usufruct belonging to religious establishments is even stipulated. Finally, an indemnity is fixed to be paid by the State, an indemnity representing all the property belonging to the Church, and included in the property without usufruct belonging to religious establishments.

As we see, the law of 1905 is really the extract, voted twenty-five years later, of the Convention. And the Separation has taken place without any rupture with the Holy See, without any religious wars, and with only a slight extra pecuniary loss, and that is all.

The great ministry, with Jules Ferry and Freycinet, must be immediately informed by

Gambetta of this project. But the miscarriage of the great combination and then the fall of Gambetta's ministry, the subsequent illness and death of the great orator, put an end to the plans for a new *modus vivendi* with Rome.

It was, at all events, very interesting to ascertain that the Holy See, fearing a schism, had consented to parley, hoping thereby to obtain a favourable settlement of the French Church's material interests, while Gambetta, on his side, had amiably planned the separation of the churches from the State without any crisis or religious wars.

With statesmen worthy of the name, like Gambetta and Leo XIII., everything was possible. But what a responsibility for those who refused to constitute the great ministry which was eventually to bring about the Separation! What a responsibility for those who deprived him of his power and caused him to die broken-hearted, he who would certainly some day have brought about this great reform!

No one will ever know what France lost by the premature death of one of its noblest children.

BISMARCK AND LES JARDIES

XIII

BISMARCK AND LES JARDIES

THERE are sometimes such extraordinary coincidences in the things of this world, causing such improbable and unexpected friendships, that the mind is often bewildered.

If some one were suddenly to have said Bismarck was the real cause of Gambetta purchasing Les Jardies and of his last prayers to be allowed definitely to celebrate his marriage with the woman he adored—we certainly should not have believed him. What can seem more improbable and more ridiculous than to think of Bismarck having any influence over the great orator's love affairs and the purchase of his little property?

However, we must never say things are impossible. Facts prove them otherwise, as the following anecdote will show.

Gambetta most certainly had secret relations with Bismarck, which the Press suspected, but was never able to prove. It is not our business

to prove the fact here. Their communications were sometimes arranged by a discreet unofficial medium, one of Gambetta's devoted friends, M. Chéberry, who for many years had done considerable business in French wines with the German, Russian, and Austrian courts. . . . He constantly visited his powerful clients, Hohenlohe, Bismarck and the German Emperor's circle, the Russian grand-dukes, etc. . . . One day at Varzin, in 1878, at Prince Bismarck's house, after having taken the chancellor's usual order for *Fine Champagne* (which, by the way, usually amounted to nearly two thousand francs), M. Chéberry purposely mentions Gambetta, the high position he has won for himself in the country, and the progress made in the reorganisation of France under his direct or indirect impulse.

"I know, I know," Bismarck interrupts, rather annoyed at this panegyric. "He is the only one among you who thinks of revenge and who is at all a menace to Germany, but unfortunately (we read "happily," for that is the chancellor's secret opinion) he won't last much longer."

M. Chéberry starts violently on hearing this assertion. "What? what? but Gambetta is in very good health; his vitality and his endurance are wonderful; he is the very picture of strength and health."

Bismarck continues: "I am not speaking thoughtlessly. I know by secret report exactly

what sort of a life your great man leads, and I know his habits. Well! his life is a life of continual overwork." (He uses the German equivalent.) "He rests neither day nor night. At night he works at his newspaper, by day he is at the Chamber, attending commissions, either in the provinces or abroad. Here he makes a speech, there he tries to recommence old alliances. All the political men who have led the same life have died young. Your Mirabeau is the most celebrated example. To be able to serve one's country for a long time" (here the chancellor begins to chuckle over the coarse things he is going to say), "one must marry an ugly woman, have children like the rest of the world, a country-place or a house to one's self, like any common peasant, where one can go and rest; nurse one's colds, wait calmly for the moment of action, and hide one's self from the bores and the rulers of the day. Look at M. Thiers! his career as a statesman has been the most beautiful career imaginable; and 'he was not a star.' Look at Grévy!" (Here he expresses an opinion in extremely bad taste.) And while he strides up and down his dining-room, and occasionally looks out of the window to watch his two famous dogs who are walking about outside, one feels that the "Monster," as Gambetta calls him, is thinking of himself.

"Your Gambetta is burning the candle at

both ends, that is my opinion. He had much better marry and go and settle in the country. Tell him that from me, for after all I rather like him. He is the only man whose intentions I really know at the present moment. At least he and I know what we want; and if he has so quickly and unexpectedly raised up France, I cannot personally be angry with him any more than I can resent his mad dream of reconquering Alsace and Lorraine. So, as one man to another, I personally recommend him the practical advice which the Princess Bismarck would also give him, like the good housekeeper that she is."

And he laughs almost as if he meant it.

On his return to Paris, M. Chéberry is extremely embarrassed when he has to relate to Gambetta his curious interview with the Iron Chancellor. How can he tell the orator that his feverish, changeable life, as Gambetta himself calls it, is unwholesome, bad for his health, that he must give up the brilliant and fascinating life of a politician?

How, too, will he receive this pessimist's views on his physical health? For it is quite true, Gambetta ages visibly. He is hardly forty yet, and his hair grows grayer every day. He is getting stout.

This continual round of banquets and receptions is fatal to him after the dreadful existence

led by him during that terrible year when he neither slept nor lived normally; no, not for one single day, always overwhelmed with cares and responsibilities, each more terrible than the other.

And since then, continually buffeted by divers and solemn events, sometimes despairing, as during the dark hours of May 7, at the fall and death of M. Thiers, sometimes madly hopeful; on the very pinnacle of glory and success, after having established the Republic, built up France anew, brought back the 363, sometimes flattered, sometimes calumniated, his life is an intermittent rush.

What will he say when Chéberry tells him his famous enemy's blunt opinion, the opinion of the man whom he calls the "Monster" and whom he is accustomed in his own mind to consider as the one opponent in Europe worthy of him; the man whom he hopes after all to persuade, so real and justified is his confidence in his own powers of attraction.

What will he think if already some warnings from his overworked organism have made him realise that his whole being shrinks from the terrible task it has to face?

Chéberry, not without some emotion (for the great man is impetuous and impulsive), broaches the delicate subject of advice on his health and

habits given by one who seems least qualified so to do.

But at the very first words Gambetta grows grave.

"Go on, go on, my dear friend, I must hear everything, and especially what my enemies say. Don't omit anything."

"Well, since you really wish it, I will tell you everything."

And M. Chéberry relates word for word his interview with Bismarck.

As the narrative progresses, Gambetta seems more and more interested. He silently walks up and down his bureau; and then, when all is over, and Chéberry almost begs pardon for having repeated such things, he stops, without uttering a word, in front of his writing-table and strikes it with his fist as he is wont to do on great occasions, and when he wants to affirm anything violently.

"Well, Bismarck is right. Yes, I feel I need a calmer life."

And certainly just at this moment the great man is grave, broken, almost sad. The enemy has revealed the truth to him; but he accepts it and in his heart he thanks him, for it is not to Bismarck's interest to keep his famous adversary alive; and he knows the "Monster" sufficiently well to know that he does not usually spare the lives of those who are against him.

"He is right! Thanks, my dear Chéberry, for having told me the truth. As the deed must always follow the thought, let us go together and look for a nest for Madame L—— and myself somewhere, from whence I can come up on foot to the Chamber if possible and . . . (he bursts out laughing at the thought) I will take great care of Bismarck's enemy. Let us visit the environs of Paris. I should like Bois-Colombes, Ville d'Avray, or any of that green-clad part of the Seine. Look about, and let me have your opinion. But let us be economical, for Madame L—— and I are not rich."

A few days later Monsieur Chéberry, always a devoted friend, returns and suggests Balzac's house, Les Jardies.

"Bravo! we will restore Balzac's house, which is in ruins, and the secretary's little cottage will do for the gardener."

Alas! a miserly old lawyer asks 120,000 francs for the ruined house. Gambetta is heartbroken. He does not possess such a huge sum, and so he contents himself with Balsac's secretary's little house and the tiny garden attached to it.

We believe that the sum paid for it was about 12,000 francs.

The garden, later on, is enlarged.

In short, Bismarck's advice has been followed!

THE DUEL OF TWO SOULS

XIV

THE DUEL OF TWO SOULS

DURING Gambetta's rapid ascent to the zenith of fame, honour and power, his proud companion resists the feminine and very legitimate temptation to show herself in public by the side of such a mortal. Objurgations and supplications are not wanting. It is always the same prayer, expressed in the passionate letters, of the man who is everywhere called the master of France, the saviour of his country, the dictator. What extraordinary, almost superhuman strength of mind this perfect creature must possess to be able to resist this continual prayer! What other woman can say that she would have sacrificed her personality to her friend's interest? In 1879, thinking he has conquered her resistance, he writes to her, mad with joy:

"Yesterday was a memorable day; I began to believe I was shaking your determination on a subject which, for a long time, I have had at

heart. I bless the day which brings me nearer to the realisation of my dearest wishes, and I hope, I hope . . ."

But the reasons which have hitherto prevented her giving consent to the marriage are stronger than ever. The insurmountable obstacle is just the high position, every day growing higher, of the great orator. Heart-broken, she tells him on the day when they propose to nominate him President of the Republic :

" This is the end of our happiness, very dear friend; I will never be, I can never be the wife of our country's chief magistrate. You must feel that yourself. I am going away " (her journey to Rome), " I do not wish to be the last obstacle in your path when you reach the very summit."

And so she disappears. Impelled by the tenderest memories, she goes to Italy, to Genoa, to the beautiful country of which he is almost the son, for in one of his letters he says :

" Here I walked with thee, adored, embraced thee; and thou art absent, and I feel too lonely in this great marble city which still seems to me like my cradle. I breathe more freely here than elsewhere; and far from feeling strange, its history comes back to me like a tradition of my own family. I give myself up to dream of the past, and I forget myself in the wonderful adventures of Christopher Columbus, the courageous naval cruises of the Dorias, the famous feats of arms

of the Spinolas, the gilded extravagancies of the Doges; though a true Frenchman, I feel a hereditary regret to behold once more all the great witnesses of the fortunes of the proud Genoese Republic, a Republic where strength and dignity walked hand in hand with the liberty of the people."

From Genoa she writes him a despairing but firm letter. "The more famous thou becomest, the quicker I must disappear. Thy country has more rights over thee than I can ever have, and France and I must know no rivalry. It would be a sacrilege if I wished to come before her, and I know that in the depths of thy soul one day thou wouldst regret it, and reproach me.

"So, accomplish thy great destiny; I will shrink back into the shadow which luckily I have never really left. (Was I not right?)

"To-day thou canst do everything. As formerly kings used, by their marriages, to make political alliances, so keep thy hand, so strong to command and to make peace.

"The Republicans will not always be on thy side. Alas! I fear it is the very nature of democracy to change, to attempt and to attempt again. Ingratitude is its law, it sacrifices its dearest children with extraordinary calmness. Be careful of those who do not care particularly for democracy, I mean especially M. Thiers, who

belongs to a rear-guard which might fail you at the critical moment. It would be a masterful stroke if thou wert to marry Mlle. Dosne. Thy relationship with M. Thiers would bring thee in touch with a greater number of intelligent and educated men, it would bring to Gambetta's Republic all those who now will have nothing to do with the Republic.

"Friend, my heart bleeds as I write these lines, but I feel it is my duty; and I wished to put distance between us, feeling well that I could never have the courage to face thy looks and thy anger.

"She who will always, always love thee."

Gambetta's reply is not long in coming. It is firm, clear, peremptory:

"No, little one, this hand has waited; it would rather wither than unite itself to another hand than thine; be well assured of this: either it will remain disconsolately empty, or it shall be thine. When wilt thou accept it? In future I shall end all my talks with that question whispered in thy ear."

And to prove that he means what he says, Gambetta refuses the Presidency of the Republic, the prospect of which had caused his friend's flight. She returns, and a new honeymoon begins for these two lovers, faithful unto death.

The Presidency of the Chamber is the cause

of another struggle. She still refuses to compromise him by being known as his friend; nothing can persuade her to appear in the official world. Against his wishes, she protects the great man's reputation, for she knows he is being attacked. The more they assault him, the more irreproachable she wishes him to be; and by her strength of character and her sacrifice, she proves that she is right.

But what poetical and inspired ideas she has! That she may always seem near him, even in the midst of his guests, she sends him the flowers which adorn his table at the grand official dinners. And delighted with this delicate and poetical thoughtfulness he writes:

"I thank thee a thousand times; thy magnificent flowers astonished and charmed my guests; and all their praises went from my heart to thine, for I thanked thee for them in my heart. Thou knowest what my happiness needs just now; thy presence at these *fêtes*, and the good which thou wouldst know how to do. I shall always return to this subject, because at every moment of my life I remember it; and I hope by strength of will to obtain what I want."

However, the observant reader of this beautiful romance can foresee that Gambetta's friend will give in perhaps when he retires once more into the shadow. There is only one real obstacle:

"the civil marriage," and this is truly and instinctively repugnant to the still religious, liberty-loving nature; and it is to this delicate and particularly painful subject that he returns with untiring perseverance in 1881, when he is only a simple candidate at the legislative elections.

"Do not seek to express thy passion in more intricate or grander words; thou knowest the secret how to say everything and to make everything understood. As to the supreme pledge of thy love, it is still easier to give; thou hast but to say one word, to make but one sign (it is true before the mayor), 'tis short but heroic, and then we shall enter the Promised Land; dost thou quite understand: Promised?"

At those words "before the mayor" she starts with pain, but not with anger (as once she would have done), and she recalls the words pronounced by her at the time of their engagement.

"I abhor the idea of a civil marriage without the priest's blessing. My whole being revolts against it as against something completely repugnant. A marriage without God's sanction would never efface my past; a marriage sanctified by Him alone can efface it."

This dispute between two hearts is at last on the way to be settled. The duel between these two souls becomes clearer and less complicated. Gambetta says:

"To me, a freethinker, the religious marriage seems useless and therefore detrimental. It is an act completely at variance with my whole mental and philosophical existence, with my opinions, with my declarations, my speeches—that is to say with my whole political life. Thou wouldst not have me abjure my positive faith for the Catholic faith. Thou toldest me once that thou couldst not endure abjurations. And would not Gambetta be abjuring his faith if he thus disowned his past? *Can* I do it, even? Do I not belong to my country and to all those who trusted in me, who acted on my suggestions, and who might reproach me in a moment of legitimate indignation for having led them into paths which I desert to-day?"

It has been said: Nothing touches a woman's heart more than pity and sorrow. It really tortures a woman worthy of the name to behold any one suffer.

The trials are beginning to fall upon Gambetta with a sort of fury.

Let us recall them briefly. He will be brutally flung from the Tarpeian Rock just at the very apogee of his political power.

It appears that he had a sort of presentiment of an approaching catastrophe, for his swan-song, which comes with the elections of 1881, is partly a programme and partly a will. He demands:

the *scrutin de liste*,[1] so dear to all great political minds, the limited revision of the Constitution, the reform of the laws, the extension of the powers accorded to the *juges de paix*, the administrative decentralisation, the reduction of military service, the income tax, and the suppression of mortmain property. This second Belleville programme contains the whole task still uncompleted, though the country has slowly worked at it during twenty years.

Such lucidity, such political discernment, such a truly democratic spirit tracing, so to say, the march to be followed by his country during a long future calls for our admiration.

Although warned of the intrigue to make him more powerful that he may be more easily overthrown, he ascends proudly, as if accomplishing a duty no patriot should shun.

We know how the Great Ministry was defeated, how all the most prominent men cautiously retreated, even M. de Freycinet abandons Gambetta (a cruel defection); but notwithstanding this wholesale desertion the Cabinet of November 14th is formed with young champions like Rouvier, Waldeck-Rousseau, Paul Bert, and other ministers: Cazot, Allain-Targé, Devès, Raynal, Cochery, Proust, Spuller, Blandin, Martin-Feuillée, Félix Faure, Chalamel, Lelièvre,

[1] A system of voting by which each voter inscribes on his ballot-paper as many names as there are nominations to be made.

all of whom have inscribed their names in the annals of democracy.

Well! this ministry lasts exactly seventy-three days! The entire Right, the Extreme Left and the Radical Left overthrow, with a sort of frenzy, the man who said in his Declaration: "Our Policy will be the Policy of France!"

The entire Right voted against Gambetta. Alas! his friend had foreseen it, and that was why she recommended him to make a marriage of diplomacy with Mlle. Dosne. The great man, like many another celebrity, could have still kept secretly the affection of the woman he loved best; but such official hypocrisies are quite impossible to this noble and passionate heart. Gambetta wishes for simplicity in love. He wishes it to be exclusive, to shine before the whole world, and for his whole life; and we can truly say that it was his conception of love which helped to bring about his political downfall.

The venom which killed Gambetta was the allegation that he aspired to dictatorship. It seemed a monstrous, improbable, unheard-of, unnatural thing to accuse him of such an aim,—he, the ardent patriot, who from the beginning had sacrificed himself, who had given up his power in 1871 (when he might have raised the standard of rebellion to his heart's content), who had shown the democracy how to obtain its liberty, who had ever in all political events

expressed his hatred of individual power, who had fought against tyranny in all its forms, and finally refused to become president of the Republic.

And yet, little by little, this monstrous calumny gained ground in the country. The democracy, formed by his own hands, turns against its creator. Belleville, Charonne, drowned his voice with indecent clamours. What defections, what treachery, what cowardly flights among the members of this parliament constituted by his own wonderful will, among the 363 who owed their political career to him, among these senators whom he had had so much trouble to get admitted to the national assembly.

Was it possible!

And then the last poignant sorrow, the last drop in the overflowing cup of bitterness, the death of the adored mother, the mother of whom he spoke to his friend on their engagement day:

"She is the one great affection of my life. I have had no other passion; my heart has only really been touched one other time, and that was when I first saw you."

Emmanuel Arène relates to us the following touching and dramatic episode:

"The clearest and the saddest of all the many memories which fill my brain is the memory of Gambetta at his mother's death-bed (whither he had hurried after escaping from the Chamber where he had just delivered one of his most

admirable speeches), in that little house at Saint-Mandé where the poor brave woman was dying. What more poignant tragedy can there be than this scene? It was just at the moment when the Egyptian question was being most hotly discussed, that unlucky question which he had so much at heart, and which certainly shortened his life. His mother had come up to Paris, and on her arrival had been struck down by a paralytic stroke. Gambetta, wild with sorrow, went twice a day, morning and evening, to sit by her side; by day his duty kept him prisoner at the Chamber; he sat there on his bench, following like a good patriot and Frenchman the grave discussions, absorbed nevertheless by his private sorrow, fearing every moment some fatal news, and haunted by the vision of that dear good old lady who, at the other end of Paris, that Paris re-echoing with her son's name, was slowly dying, holding on to life with all her last strength as if she understood that he must go on speaking, and reproached herself—poor excellent creature, the eternally devoted mother—for thus troubling him and causing him such cruel pain!

"Her death came late enough to enable Gambetta, mastering his agony and quelling his bleeding heart, to mount to the rostrum and pronounce his admirable speech on Egypt, his last speech, which will always seem like an exquisite swan-song, brilliant and magnificent!

When he had finished, while the applause was still continuing, I can see him jumping into the carriage and hurrying off to Saint-Mandé. We accompanied him together with Etienne; we arrived together, and I shall never cease to see the man who had just electrified the Chamber, the marvellous orator whose ardent voice still re-echoed among the arches of the Palais-Bourbon, the great politician whose name, even at that hour, was in everybody's mouth, whose speeches were telegraphed to the very ends of the earth —I shall always see him by that little iron bedstead, far away from all the clamours aroused by his speech, sobbing like a child, trying to warm in his own hot hands his mother's hands already cold, and with that same voice so powerful only a few moments ago, now so gentle, so piteously calling 'Mother! mother!' the poor beloved old lady who could no longer hear him!"

Her death is the last and supreme trial. Heartbroken, he writes from Nice:

"Alone, I am going to take my poor mother to her last resting-place, up there, overlooking the sea, under the sunshine and the flowers, close to my beloved aunt—I love thee, to use my father's expression, as Donna and Madonna."

Gambetta's great and noble companion can no longer resist his untiring prayer. He is there alone, crushed down, ill, motherless, abandoned.

His political career seems ruined. Sometimes, however, his enthusiastic and optimistic nature finds new courage, as when, from his bed at Jardies, he says to Reinach : " I shall come back and make them a conciliatory speech." Just now he is oblivious of everything. He writes to his friend to prepare their little home.

" I suppose thou art already settled at Ville d'Avray, that thou wilt stay there during our fortnight's separation, that thou wilt superintend the proper execution of the works, and that thou wilt be, as is seemly, the mistress of the house, thus rehearsing the rôle which awaits thee as soon as possible. I am more and more sure of my happiness. I rejoice at having so well chosen my companion, and I am in haste to meet her on whom depends all my life's gladness, my heart's peace, and the ineffable joy of possessing an inestimable treasure from which nothing ever again can separate me. I return thee that magnificent page by Balzac with the remark that it is true of us both and for us both ; that it is this perfect harmony of soul (which he was unable to possess or to attain) which makes our divine communion inaccessible to others."

At last their hearts are happy. He looks forward to the promised bliss. She consents ! she consents ! His brain re-echoes with the words.

On the day of their engagement he had said

to her: "Swear to me that if I fail, if I am unhappy, misunderstood, persecuted, that you will give me the home I crave for?" And she replies: "I swear." And she keeps her promise. Like all great minds, she takes a supreme delight in sacrificing herself, her word having been once given.

Ah! what has become of that lately important question of a civil or religious marriage? It is a curious thing that when she sees such suffering and sorrow, she almost forgets that controversy which seemed of so much consequence when fortune smiled. We are inclined to think that the woman's sacrifice, as always, was all the more complete and noble.

But has she immolated on the altar of love her belief and her invincible repulsion?

Has Gambetta consented to realise her dream, to have their marriage blessed by the archbishop of Paris, which marriage alone can wash the stain from her life, a stain which might dim Gambetta's name?

We cannot, we do not wish to say. Perhaps other letters will explain this mystery, especially one of her letters which we reproduce later.

Meanwhile, in either case, we can only admire the sacrifice, whether it was his or hers; for it is a pure and sublime sacrifice which definitely unites these two great souls, after having united two such beautiful and noble beings.

LOVE IN A COTTAGE

XV

LOVE IN A COTTAGE

THEIR hearts are full of happiness. She consents to the marriage. Gambetta writes to his father and informs his friends. They look for a house in Paris, but cannot find one; and many precious moments are wasted during their search. They do not want to begin their married life by incurring useless expenses; they talk over the future, and for the first time enter thoroughly into the question of household expenses and the need of economy.

Worn out with looking for their new home, they finally settle down at Les Jardies.

He chooses, for himself, the only really big room on the first floor of the house, described by Reinach as "a gardener's shed shaken by the least puff of wind!"

It is entered by a little door which has lately been restored. Immediately on the left hand is a low doorway leading to the old kitchen used by Balzac's gardener. A little farther on is a

second door leading to a small room which served formerly as ante-room, dining-room and drawing-room; quite at the other end a door opens on to the winding wooden staircase leading to the first and only floor. (This staircase is so narrow that a few days later it will seem almost impossible to carry the coffin down it.) Gambetta cannot receive his friends here, or dine, or use any of the rooms as a waiting-room. At least they must have a drawing-room. First they divide the ante-room into a tiny dining-room and a pantry which must also serve as a passage way to the staircase.

But a drawing-room is indispensable. So they go to the great expense of covering in a space at the side with zinc; and this is the drawing-room, somewhat like a hot-house in summer because of the nature of its roof, and bitterly cold in winter though well covered with creepers.

Three rooms on the entrance floor, an inside lobby for the staircase. Outside, sundry little wooden outhouses. And that is all.

On the first floor, above the kitchen, Gambetta has his small study. Above the dining-room is the bedroom (to which historic chamber people make pilgrimages nowadays). Then opening on to the first floor ante-room is another room leading into a dressing-room once used as a storeroom

for seeds and plants in winter time. This is the room of the lady who is soon to be officially termed Madame Léon Gambetta.

This miserable habitation is also unhealthy. In front is a deep ditch filled with the rain water which trickles down from the surrounding hills; then in a corner, just in the unhealthiest position, stands the humble house, a mere gardener's shed, soaked through and through with damp.

And this is the palace of the great man who handles the three thousand million francs of the French treasury. It has cost him twelve thousand francs to purchase this and a small bit of land, part of which has to be sold at his death to pay the balance of a small debt.

In the political circles of the opposition they said: "Behold his profits from the millions stolen during the war or won in speculations with the money designed for the National Defence!"

Just for a little time the sun shines on the trees and into their hearts.

"All I possess," laughingly exclaims the master of this palace, "belongs to thee for ever, for everything is already marked with our two initials, L. G.!" (Léon and Gambetta).

And she thinks to herself in her happiness: "Yes, God wills it thus."

But this bare room, this "dressing-room-roost" as she calls it! How can she arrange it?

And coquettishly and fastidiously she strives to do her best.

The furnishing of a pretty woman's rooms is always a complicated affair.

The great man, smiling at all the enormous difficulties which beset his busy companion, says: "Imagine that a princess is going to live in a hunting-box!"

And they laugh merrily.

What does it matter? For here there is to be "Love in a cottage," as our mothers used to say.

What does it matter? Happiness is knocking at the door of Les Jardies.

Will it ever enter?

THE TRUTH ABOUT GAMBETTA'S ACCIDENT

XVI

THE TRUTH ABOUT GAMBETTA'S ACCIDENT

THERE is something really strange in the persistence of so many different versions of the history of the pistol-shot at Les Jardies.

It would seem as if Gambetta's life—of which I have revealed the only mystery—had been so public, so exposed to the light of day, so free from all scandal, notwithstanding his adversaries' efforts, that his detractors, even his posthumous enemies, could only vent their spite by tampering with the truth about the pistol-shot at Les Jardies.

It is my duty to state here precisely, supported by minor facts well proven and easily verified, the unimportant causes which produced the great and terrible catastrophe.

The accident was in fact due to two causes.

First, General Thoumas' refusal to stay and lunch at Les Jardies, as he had been invited to do by the master of the house on the very morning of the accident.

Secondly, the absence of Gambetta's devoted old servant, François Robelin.

It is needless to lay stress on General Thoumas' refusal to accept Gambetta's hospitality.

It is one of the ironies of fate that such a great man's life should depend on a friend's entirely casual action.

Let us relate the facts.

It is Monday, November 27th. On Saturday Gambetta had written to his friend to come to Ville d'Avray in the evening, that they might continue their preparations. General Thoumas, who has been staying there for a week, is going away. All the morning Gambetta has talked about the army with this brave and true soldier. They lived through "the terrible year" together. Both instinctively understand each other, and it is thanks to General Thoumas that Gambetta is so familiar with the army's very soul.

It is thanks to him that the government and the republican army agreed, and do agree so well, and so entirely; so different from the time when suspicion isolated the nation from the army of the Second Empire.

General Thoumas rises from his seat. Gambetta says: "Stay and lunch with us, my dear Thoumas—my wife will be delighted to make your acquaintance."

"Alas! no, I am invited to Versailles."

And after having warmly shaken hands, they

part on the threshold of the little gate leading out of the well-known garden.

It is already half-past ten; half an hour later is the luncheon hour at Les Jardies. His friend is up there in her little room. In order to please her hero she is putting a finishing touch to her toilette, about which she is more particular than ever. While waiting for lunch Gambetta, who cannot bear to be idle, prepares to go and practise in the garden with a pistol.

He goes up to his room to fetch a revolver lately sent to him by a famous gunsmith named Claudin.

Let us here pause a moment, for the second cause of the accident must be explained.

Ever since the war Gambetta has had as his servant one of the *garde mobile* named François Robelin.

François Robelin is the very soul of neatness and dexterity; he knows all the great man's habits. It is he who, during Gambetta's bachelor days, and later when he was President of the Chamber, received and ushered in in their turn all the important men in France.

It is he naturally who has the care of the fire-arms, which Gambetta never touches except to shoot from time to time, and the old soldier keeps them in excellent order.

With him, there is no need to worry,

everything is always ready; and it is wonderful to see the servant's absolute devotion, and the master's equally absolute confidence. François knows all the little ins and outs of a public man's life. He knows that any day pistol-shots may be exchanged.

But François has not escaped the common fate. François has married, and the couple have been offered a good place. How can he refuse? Gambetta, always kind, has not hesitated to sacrifice himself, and has let François go.

Naturally, the friend who presides over the arrangements for the new matrimonial life at Les Jardies has a candidate to replace him, and his name is Paul. Paul has no idea, as yet, of looking after Gambetta's personal affairs. Paul is clumsy. He also has a fault which only appears after some time; he is rather susceptible to the charms of Bacchus.

In short, Gambetta cannot trust everything to him as he used to do to François, and certainly he cannot let him clean his firearms.

Since his duel with Fourtou, Gambetta, like Clemenceau and Cassagnac, practises the art of pistol-shooting. He has acquired a certain amount of skill in this exercise which insures to the political man a wholesome amount of respect on the part of his over-noisy adversaries.

In François' time the firearms were properly looked after. Since they have been at Les

Jardies they have got into a bad state; they are still loaded and are getting rusty.

Gambetta, when in his room, examines the revolver, made after a new model, sent to him by Claudin; he prepares to load it, and this is what happens, according to the invariable account given by Gambetta himself to his friends:

"One of the chambers is still loaded; I do not know this; and I only perceive it when, holding the butt-end with my left hand and pressing the barrel with my right, I open the breech. I then see that there is still a bullet wedged in the barrel.

"I try to close the breech, but the bullet will not move. Then placing my right hand across the mouth of the barrel, while with the left I continue to hold up the butt-end, I imprudently press hard, not thinking that this pressure is enough to send off the cartridge. The pistol suddenly goes off with a spluttering noise, and the bullet comes out at the breech, which is insecurely closed, and penetrates the palm of my right hand just above the fleshy part at the base of the thumb.

"The ball penetrates under the outer skin, follows the surface of the muscles and comes out again five centimetres from the wrist on the outside of my arm."

Thanks to the position of the hand, which

is, so to speak, parallel with the barrel, the ball does not pass right through it, as has been erroneously reported.

It is a slight, ordinary accident, for no bones or arteries have been broken, the ball having followed along the muscles and then simply come out by the arm.

But it is not the first time Gambetta has been imprudent with firearms. François used to relate:

"Monsieur was very incautious. One day, just before presenting arms, he fired a shot which ran right down his leg. It was a miracle that he neither had his leg nor his foot shot through."

HOW A FALSE REPORT CAME TO BE SPREAD ABOUT

XVII

HOW A FALSE REPORT CAME TO BE SPREAD ABOUT

HOW did they come to put such strange and dramatic interpretations on such a simple and natural narrative? How did all the stories get about?

We must confess: in the very easiest way.

One of the editors of the *Petit Journal* and M. Antonin Proust were the innocent and irresponsible actors in an incident now forgotten.

Here it is:

A short article in the *Petit Journal* gives the first version of a rumour that Gambetta's friend, in a fit of jealousy, had shot him.

How did this article come to be written? and by what was it caused?

It shows us a very curious case of modern popular psychology.

As soon as the accident is known at Ville d'Avray, close to Les Jardies, a miracle takes place in the popular mind for which our modern

press is responsible, thanks to its ever-increasing emotional tendency, what I call: "secret suggestion."

Supposing that a sensational accident excites a crowd, the press always jumps at first conclusions without waiting to learn the real cause of the accident; and this precipitation only helps to complicate matters, makes interference ridiculous, and throws a theatrical glamour over the whole affair.

"The French love the stage," will be the amiable comment of a foreigner.

It is true that for a long time the inhabitants of Ville d'Avray had been gossiping about the mystery of Les Jardies, the identity of the unknown lady and her relationship to the man of the day, Gambetta. A pistol-shot? Gambetta wounded? Who has wounded him? The mysterious lady forsooth? She was there when the servants appeared and found Gambetta covered with blood.

Could it be caused by a fit of jealousy? Yes, that is it, and so the report spreads. "It is carried from mouth to mouth." In the servants' halls in all the villas, in the *café*, in the street, this version of the accident spreads, gathering details, and changing complexion in its course. "The anonymous and secret suggestion is working."

But the reporter appears on the scene; he

goes to the *café* where they are discussing the incident. His newspaper has sent him, and he too has been plied with "suggestions." As is quite natural, he is inclined to take the most sensational view of the affair.

However, the *Petit Journal's* reporter goes about his business with impartiality.

But let him speak for himself:

"Continuing to make inquiries, I meet M. Antonin Proust who also has come to get news, and I ask him the same question I have just asked M. Arnaud, deputy of Ariège. M. Proust is a good-natured man, speaking little, always smiling.

"When he hears my question as to the identity of the unknown lady and as to her position in the household, he smiles and says nothing. I then say:

"'But what is all this mystery? Is it true what they say, then?'

"'And what do they say?'

"'They say that the shot was fired by this lady, and not by M. Gambetta.'

"'And where do they say that?'

"'At the café, in the street, opposite, at the house frequented by the domestics.'

"'Ah? well! let them say so, and don't repeat it in your paper.'

"'I will not repeat it if you will give me your word of honour that it is not true.'

"'It is not true.'

"'On your word of honour?'

"'Oh! don't print this story, for it is not true. . . .'

"Still cool and calm, Proust goes off to catch the train, but without having given his word of honour as I had asked him to do."

Then the journalist thinks to himself that perhaps, after all, the conversation overheard by him at the café is not to be so much despised as it appeared at first sight; and so without corroboration he launches forth the famous version which in a few minutes went round the world!

Gambetta's political enemies, his ungrateful friends are not really sorry at last to discover a little scandal in his life, and the version is received, so to speak, with enthusiasm.

And this is how the most fantastic interpretations are frequently created, and are sometimes all the more warmly received because they are so improbable. For those who knew these two people, good even among the best, smile when they hear of a quarrel or a scene between Gambetta and his adored friend on the very eve of that marriage for which he had been praying for so many years.

GAMBETTA'S REAL ILLNESS AND DEATH

XVIII

GAMBETTA'S REAL ILLNESS AND DEATH

ON hearing the explosion, his terrified friend rushes out of her room. Gambetta, bleeding freely, assures her that it is nothing, and explains how the accident happened. With extraordinary intelligence and presence of mind she attends to his wounded hand. Doctor Lannelongue, in his work, *Clinical Surgery*, gives the following details of the accident :—

"The noise of the detonation was not very great; the wounded man immediately felt an extremely sharp pain in his hand, which, in his account, he compared to a stroke of lightning; furthermore a quick flow of blood streamed from the orifice made by the projectile. Seeing that he had been wounded, M. Gambetta first thought that the ball had not come out; for a quarter of an hour he thought he could still feel it in his hand, and he tried several times to expel it by compression. Soon a spot of blood staining

the sleeve of his shirt showed him the orifice by which the ball had made its exit. During some time efforts were made to stop the hemorrhage, and as the blood still continued to flow, not in jets but in a little stream, his servants brought him a large jug of salted water into which he plunged his hand; the water was twice changed and both times it was very red; he considered that 'he had lost a fair amount of blood.' Then he wrapped his hand first in two towels and then in a large handkerchief; all the linen was soaked with blood. Doctor Gilles of the Brézin hospital, and Doctor Guerdat of Ville d'Avray, then arrived and proceeded to apply a slightly compressive dressing which stopped the hemorrhage."

Doctor Lannelongue arrives about one o'clock; he examines and finishes the dressing. Any wound in the hand is serious, even when the ball, as in this case, has only gone through the flesh without tearing any artery. What makes the accident of November 27 perhaps more serious is, first, Gambetta's general state of health, which for a long time has made his friends secretly anxious, and then the cramped and narrow room in which he will have to lie, and which, as we have already stated, is devoid of all the necessary comforts.

However, after the first alarm has subsided, they quickly grow calmer. Gambetta looks at the whole affair in quite a cheerful light, and

gently laughs at his friend because she is so grieved about this scratch.

What does it matter? he is with her. They meant to celebrate their marriage in three days' time; it will have to be delayed a little, that is all.

And they laugh over the difficulty they will have to slip the wedding-ring on to the hand wrapped up in bandages.

"Bah!" he says; "the ring-finger is uninjured! that is all we want!"

The accident of November 27th causes but a momentary feeling of alarm to Gambetta's friends. Their faith is so great in this man so necessary to the Republic's glory, and to the country's resurrection, that they soon declare that Gambetta will be able to return to Paris in the beginning of January. The Army Commission, of which he is the moving spirit, does not wish to deliberate during his absence, and so it adjourns its meetings. And then he soon begins to receive visitors in his sick-room, though by so doing he acts very unwisely. He continues to read the newspapers and letters sent to him from all the corners of the earth. He takes an interest in everything; and though his body is condemned to inaction, his mind, always at work, neglects none of the interests confided to his charge. He commissions Emmanuel Arène to speak to the President of the Council, Duclerc, on the subject of the Tonkin

affairs. He says to Reinach: "I shall come back to the Chamber, and make a conciliatory speech."

Death and its prospects are the things abou which he least troubles himself.

Under the care of Doctor Lannelongue, the wound quickly heals without any suppuration.

Here is an extract from the doctor's journal dated December 8th: — "Temperature 36·7 — pulse 72. On removing the dressing the hand looks much better, almost normal; the fingers are completely extended; all the œdema has disappeared. The orifice made by the projectile in the palm of the hand is nearly closed, and the brachial orifice is hidden by a very small pinkish eruption of fleshy pustules. The intermediate passage made by the projectile seems to be entirely healed; the movements of the wrist-joints are completely normal. The patient states that he suffers no pain in his fingers; but that the first and little fingers 'worry him most'; they feel as if they were bent into the palm of his hand, and he often has to look at it to reassure himself that such is not the case.

"A still stranger sensation is that which Gambetta feels when his hand is stretched out on a bolster outside his bed: it seems to him as if it were lying across his chest, and again he has to look at it to realise the truth. Monsieur Gambetta

to-day has made a slightly heavier luncheon: soup, boiled eggs, four oysters with some bread, and the wings of a woodcock." (Evidently a too abundant and premature nourishment.)

But it is after December 8th, when the wound is nearly healed, that the symptoms become more alarming. Too many doctors are around Gambetta's bed. Siredey, his usual doctor, Fieuzal, his friend, Messieurs Gilles and Guerdat from Ville d'Avray, three house surgeons from the hospitals, Messieurs Walter, Berne, and Martinet, assist at the wounded man's bedside, without counting Monsieur O. Lannelongue, who accomplishes his part with absolute success, and lastly M. Charcot, who is only called in on December 10th.

No one thinks much about Gambetta's general health while the wound is healing. They give him solid food from the beginning, and aperient medicine every alternate day.

After the too solid repast of December 8th his condition grows worse.

On December 10th, Doctor Lannelongue writes:

"The abdominal uneasiness is greater, and M. Gambetta tells us that the night before he had suddenly felt a sharp pain in his right side, and he tries, without success, to show us the spot. This pain causes insomnia, and on Sunday he complains again, though this time the pain is

much less severe. The symptoms of indigestion are more pronounced, with complete want of appetite."

It is not the first time that he has felt this pain, and his intimate friends say they have often seen him, while engaged in animated conversation, suddenly put his hand to his right side as if he felt a sudden sharp pain there.

This is evidently the beginning of an intestinal perforation (appendicitis, then unknown by that name to the medical world), and Doctor Lannelongue is the first and only one to diagnose the disease, as later revealed at the post-mortem examination.

A struggle now begins between the surgeon, who feels that an operation is imperative, and the other doctors who will not undertake the responsibility of such an operation.

On the morning of December 11th, the pulse is already 80. The face is slightly congested, the tongue white and very much coated, with complete distaste for food. However, on the 12th and 13th December, Gambetta is so much better that he is able to walk about a little in the house and to eat (which is a great mistake).

On the 16th he orders a carriage and goes out. More imprudence. He catches cold, for that evening his temperature rises to 39·6 and the pulse is 88. Lannelongue arrives at ten o'clock, M. Siredey is sent for in the night. They

ascertain that there is a puffiness on the right side of the stomach, and M. Siredey states in a note addressed to M. Lannelongue: "I think typhlitis is highly probable."

All those who see the sick man on the 16th think him depressed and evidently suffering from a still undefined malady.

Notwithstanding his friends' optimism, still continuing to make their belief chime with their hopes, those who visit him that day, Challemel-Lacour, Ferdinand Dreyfus, and Emmanuel Arène, are all much grieved; Gambetta is certainly afflicted with some "serious internal malady." He talks listlessly and seldom.

The fever becomes more constant, and vomiting marks the characteristic symptoms of the suspected appendicitis. They talk of perityphlitis, congestion of the pericœcum, but they do nothing and only wait.

Even now it is not too late to act energetically. Albumen appears. Nevertheless, on the 20th they give him some soup, a little wine and water; and at two o'clock he is seized with severe fits of shivering, followed by a burning fever and perspiration.

They give him "*un grog*," which he vomits.

For the first time Doctor Lannelongue mentions "an extra-peritoneal perforation of the intestine as being the primary cause of these symptoms; he supposes that a foreign body

must have caused an ulceration or a fissure in the walls of the stomach, and" (the doctor says) "we drew on paper the adherences we supposed existed and which we considered probable."

(This document, dated December 20th, has been reproduced in Doctor Lannelongue's work. It is absolutely prophetic.)

From this moment Doctor Lannelongue is looked upon with suspicion by his brother doctors, and they try to send him away. M. Charcot diagnoses a simple perityphlitis affecting the colon.

The truth is, as Doctor Lannelongue discovered, that the intestine is perforated exactly as he had shown in his drawing.

From the 24th to the 27th the sick man grows worse, and still they do nothing.

On December 28th, there is a consultation of seven doctors: Charcot, Verneuil, Trelat, Siredey, Gilles, Fieuzal, and Lannelongue. All, except the latter, find that perityphlitis certainly exists, and that all other hypotheses must be rejected!

They all agree that "there must be no surgical intervention, for it would only be very dangerous and give no hope of a successful result."

Here is what Doctor Lannelongue says in his book:

"The operation which I intended to perform was not what would now be performed in cases of appendicitis. I proposed to get at the cœcum through the lumbar extra-peritoneum. The

purulent rectro-cœcal mass must indubitably have been opened, and according to circumstances I should or should not have made a suture of the ulceration of the cœcum or the appendix; at all events I should have cleansed the affected parts. At the two consultations held December 21st and 28th my proposals were rejected. In future Gambetta's friends ceased to trust me with the confidence which I had hitherto enjoyed; they even hinted to me that I need not come again; and certainly I should have deserted my post if it had not been for the devotion and affection I felt for Gambetta and which was of old standing; I did not wish to abandon my friend just at the very moment when he was dying, away from all his family."

The illness makes rapid progress.

Erysipelas appears on the patient's abdomen; the mouth becomes dry, the skin clammy. On the 30th they induce him to take some tea with milk in it, as well as some kirsch and a "grog" (all the above details are quoted from the bulletin made during his illness).

Gambetta becomes indifferent to everything; his temperature is 37°, the pulse 120; his respiration is 40 per minute.

On December 31st all the doctors, except Lannelongue, silently watch the sick man die. They give him some coffee, which he throws up; they give him champagne, brandy, rum. He

vomits the champagne. They warm the sick man with hot-water bottles.

At ten o'clock at night the alarming symptoms increase and grow more serious; however, the patient is still conscious. He speaks when they moisten his mouth; he replies for the last time at a quarter to eleven. The end is imminent, and his death takes place without any struggle a few minutes before midnight.

It has been said: "Gambetta would still be alive if he had been attended by a country doctor." One can also say that if they had listened to Doctor Lannelongue an operation on the 23rd would probably have saved him.

Great doctors standing by the bedside of great men are timid, and often hesitate fatally.

We can safely say that Gambetta did not expect a fatal termination. He realised too deeply the mission which remained for him to accomplish to imagine even that inexorable death would stop him halfway. That, at least, is the impression felt by those who had the sad privilege of tending him in his last days. But his heart was so tender, so good, that he kept to himself any gloomy forebodings for fear of adding to the sorrows of her who had nursed him with such passionate devotion. He never uttered a complaint. Two hours before drawing his last breath he smiled and made a sign to thank

Doctor Lannelongue. Perhaps his last look of recognition was for the friend of his early days, Eugène Spuller.

Reinach says, "When Rouvier, Barrère, Isambert, Colani, and myself arrived at Ville d'Avray all was over; he has not survived the year 1882, such a cruel year for him, such an unlucky one for France; he had had a superstitious fear of it from the beginning of his illness. . . ."

In his narrow, draughty little room, Gambetta lies stretched out on his death-bed. His face looks younger under his white curls, and reminds one of the man of 1869 before the trials of "the terrible year."

We stay there all night, recalling old memories, looking into the future with anguish.

At dawn all Paris knows the melancholy news, and the pilgrimage begins; each train brings hundreds of known and unknown friends. The first of January is as mild and bright as a spring day; the house and the sunny garden are full. Many of his late adversaries mingle their sorrow with ours. Bonnat, Falguière, Antonin Proust, Carjat, and Bastien-Lepage have preserved for posterity the last likeness of this noble face. All repeat, "This death is a defeat."

And we think of that other defeat which he never forgot and which was so terribly aggravated by his death.

ALONE IN THE WORLD

XIX

ALONE IN THE WORLD

WHILE France is giving a splendid funeral to him who gave her renewed life, to him who in the hours of supreme trial had inspired confidence in his genius, in his future; while the Republic is sadly saluting him who founded and definitely established it in this country, which in less than a century had endured seven governments; while the politicians who committed the murder, using as their weapon the accusation of dictatorship, repent and begin to understand the irreparable loss just sustained by the Republican Union; while his faithful friends (and they are many and deeply sincere) weep bitterly—what becomes of the woman he loved so much and so passionately?

After having kissed, before the crowd of officials, the forehead of him who belonged to her, of him whom she nursed night and day, whose tender and piteous calls she still hears, after having given one last look at this cottage

Les Jardies, only a few days ago re-echoing with words of joy and hope, she goes away.

As I said, they will never see her again.

And it is true.

She goes away, destitute of all resources, poor, sad, as she came long ago to her well-beloved. The improbable thought that death might separate them had never once occurred to either of them.

There was no legacy to her, to whom, in fact, in giving himself he gave everything.

A small sum of money in one of her dresses and the engagement ring, "Hors cet annel point n'est d'amour," given on the first day of their union.

That is all she possesses.

The sister she loved so dearly is dead, leaving a son soon to be carried off by a cruel illness. Father, mother, sister, friend, all gone! She only has a distant cousin, almost unknown to her, and that is all.

Yesterday she was the wife of a man who brought her honour, glory, respect, assured her maintenance, gave her a family.

To-day she is destitute, friendless, without relations, and all this has happened without any warning, totally unexpected, in a few hours, all caused by this almost instantaneous death.

Alone! alone! she repeats it, half stupefied by the reality.

DEATH MASK OF GAMBETTA (PROFILE)

Reproduced by kind permission of Professor A. Legros

She enters the forest where they so often walked, she wanders along, now weeping with long unending sobs, stumbling, sitting on the edge of a bank, trying to remember something in the chaos of her aching brain, feeling nothing but an immense sorrow in a bottomless abyss.

"He is dead! he has gone for ever! he who loved his beloved above everything and everyone. He who idolised her, used to kneel at her feet, press her to his heart, call her the sweetest names his exalted passion could invent!

"I shall never see him again! I shall never see him again!" And her sobs come quicker, and the thought of death seems to her the only way out of her troubles.

Little by little, instinctively, she walks towards the convent of Suresnes where she used so often to go with him. She sees again the milestone on which the dear great man used to rest after their walks, saying to her in his kind tolerance: "Go and say good evening to your good sisters, I will wait for you here."

The convent seems to her like the refuge, the hiding-place needful to all great sorrows.

But at the same time it seems to her that she will be obliged to relate her life-story and to reveal the tie which united her to the illustrious dead man. No, no; no confidences, no questions, only oblivion.

And the idea that she will live alone, and like

all good Catholics wait patiently for the end, comes to her while sitting in the shadow of this convent, which seems to forbid her to commit suicide.

She will live, but where, how ?

And she once more goes towards Paris where one can suffer undisturbed, uncared for, unobserved. . . .

She arrives there after dusk, and a miserable little furnished room on the fifth floor receives incognito the woman who only a few days ago was to have become the wife of the first statesman of his time and to have been presented as such to all the different celebrities of France.

We must honestly acknowledge that Gambetta's relations do not know what to think of this disappearance. For a long time the great orator's family, his father and his sister, have accepted this alliance.

But proud, almost savage in her natural scorn for all which does not concern *Him*, she has preferred to disappear for ever.

During five days they look for her, but without success.

The nation, by giving Gambetta a public funeral, demonstrates its gratitude to him. The clamours, the hymns, the salute of the cannon reach her ears.

France is burying its great dead.

DEATH MASK OF GAMBETTA (FULL FACE)
Reproduced by kind permission of Professor A. Legros

All France weeps.

The lonely woman sheds her bitter tears in silence.

If the dead can see and think in the world beyond, who can dare say that Gambetta's soul is not more present in this garret with the lonely, miserable beloved one, than with this nation, clad in mourning, rendering him a solemn and final homage?

After carefully searching for five days, Monsieur P——, to-day occupying one of the greatest financial positions in Paris, and nearly the only person who knows Gambetta's secret, at last finds the poor woman in her garret.

We will not reveal what was said during that interview.

We have made it a rule in this narrative to mention no other characters than those of Gambetta and his companion. We wished to write the story of two hearts, and not a more or less indiscreet chronicle of political events.

But we can say that the great orator's family acted very nobly, and with the help of Monsieur P—— succeeded after a long struggle in inducing her, whom already everyone considered to be the noble widow of the great orator, to accept some modest means of existence.

The daughter of S. K., Gambetta's Alsatian companion in the Chamber, is particularly generous.

We are now going to relate the course of this lonely life after the death of all hope, for thus alone shall we really be able to know her who in these pages has been more or less shrouded in mystery.

She has hardly spoken at all hitherto. What will she say after the death of her only friend?

THE LETTERS OF MADAME LÊONIE LÉON

XX

THE LETTERS OF MADAME LÉONIE LÉON

AFTER the mortal blow endured at Les Jardies, what has become of Gambetta's friend?

By what tremendous effort of will has she managed to escape from the curiosity of the public? How has she managed to hide herself away with the great orator's memory and letters, far from his friends and the world? What was the life of this superior woman who could not prevent herself from thinking, living, remembering, however much she might long to forget?

This is the second mystery in this pure and interesting romance, so little to the taste of those who love sensational revelations, but intensely interesting to those who can appreciate delicate feelings.

The third mystery is as follows: The great orator's letters which we have read are full of enthusiasm for the chosen woman of his heart.

He places her so high in his esteem, his admiration for her is so exalted, that sceptical people are almost justified in asking whether she was really worthy of such enthusiasm.

This was why it was important, failing the letters addressed to Gambetta and mentioned by him, to be able to judge of this noble woman's real intellectual worth by her correspondence with others.

I have been able to chronicle her life after her friend's death not from imagination, but from the following authentic documents: Gambetta had a humble and affectionate friend, quite without ambitions, Monsieur C., who has never wished to be decorated, is known to few, and is still living in voluntary retirement.

His friend has a wife—she is a grandmother now—whose lofty sentiments and whose ready and shrewd pen were sure to attract Gambetta's friend. What is more natural, more thoroughly French than to meet, to understand, and then to love each other? From this charmingly contrasted correspondence, addressed by a woman in mourning, tortured by memory, to a smiling mother surrounded by her rosy children, I have extracted my documents, and I have been able to chronicle the principal features in the mysterious life and character of her whom I do not fear now to call the widow of Gambetta.

After the horrible catastrophe, one thought

alone haunts this unhappy woman's brain. She must go away, leave Paris, forget, sleep.

She leaves for Rome, where she had once been in secret with Gambetta; she will pray in the Vatican which she loves, and of which she often speaks. Then she cannot bear Rome any longer, and she writes the following brief letters:

"I am going to leave Rome where, alas, I can no longer sleep. I shall remain two or three days in Milan, then I shall go to Geneva, perhaps I shall be able to sleep there without having to take chloral every night to help me to forget my past agonies and the horrible present."

From Geneva she writes again:

"I have suddenly decided to come to Switzerland, because I felt my brain whirl among all those sad memories where the implacable past is ever present to my eyes. What a heavy burden life is!"

Alas! She can sleep no better in Geneva than in Rome, and invincibly her friend's grave attracts her; she goes to Nice, she finds his tomb neglected, badly kept. What grief! She hurries away heart-broken. On December 31st, on the anniversary of the death which she can never forget, she writes:

"Rome.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"Yesterday you must certainly have been thinking of me, and you must have felt my heart beat near yours at the memory of past sorrows. After leaving Geneva I stayed two months in Nice; and notwithstanding that there I was close to the neglected, badly kept grave, I preferred to come to Rome, where each stone reminds one of the instability of the things of this world, the ingratitude of mankind, and the uncertainty of earthly happiness."

Her grief is at its height; her friend writes to her to soothe her, telling her of her own rosy children; but the unhappy woman's brief, spasmodic letters still continue.

One seems to hear the approaching step of the spectre of suicide; but her religion holds her back; gloomy resolutions, ever changing, pass through her brain.

"July 15th.

"DEAR MADAME,

"Your affectionate remembrance touched me very deeply, but nothing can calm the sufferings of a heart from which death has, one by one, stolen all its dearest ones. I am as busy settling my affairs as if I had to die to-morrow; perhaps I shall go and end my days in a convent;

at all events I will tell you if I do so, for I love you too much not to let you know my plans.

"Affectionately yours,

"L. L."

Fatality, however, has not yet sufficiently overwhelmed this great soul. Her nephew, her sister's beloved child, whom Gambetta loved so tenderly that people thought he must be his own son, is dying. A deadly malady is undermining his constitution. Strange to say, this new trial calls her back to the realities of life. The desperate struggle against death, as once before at Les Jardies, gives her new strength. The true woman's whole vocation is to fight for those she loves. But fate again is the strongest. The young man dies.

"All is over, my poor nephew died this night of rapid consumption. It is dreadful. He will be buried in the country in a family vault.

"L. L."

What family has given a place in its vault to this once fatherless child? One more mystery among many others.

At last, after some years, the crisis of despair abates. Paroxysms of grief are often followed by blessed calm. Her letters are calmer, and

begin to show a little of that poetry she knew so well how to express.

"Corso.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I sent the children some 'dolce' to remind them of their old friend at Auteuil. Have they got lost on the journey?

"Thanks for your affectionate remembrance so sweetly expressed in your own unapproachable way. Your letter found me a little calmer than when I left; my nerves gradually relax in this perfect silence. There are not many people in Rome or in this hotel. The great shadow of death is over everything here, teaching one how to suffer, to die, and to hope for better things than life can give.

"We have had some rainy days, even some snow, but the sky has already once more become dark-blue, and the sun throws its golden beams on the numerous cupolas which cover the world's history."

"Hôtel de Rome, Corso.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"What can I wish you, you who dwell in an ocean of happiness? That there may be no cloud, no storm; and that is what I wish from the bottom of a heart which truly loves you. The weather is dreadful, but it is what I expected.

The month of December is always rainy in Rome, and all the French have left. I have heard such beautiful music! Quite an unique event, and quite exquisite: a concert in honour of Palestrina and nothing but his music performed in the magnificent Throne Room of the Barberini palace. It lasted for an hour, and then immediately, more painful than ever, the old memories come back! No, time cannot heal such wounds; on the contrary it can only irritate them; and never have I felt more unhappy than at this moment, as I write this letter; I embrace you, assuring you of my most affectionate wishes for you and your dear ones."

What simplicity, and what poetry hidden by grief is expressed in this letter!

One of the characteristics of this exquisite creature is that all her life she has been . . . I try to find a word exactly expressing my thought —not coquettish, for that means something which she never was—not fond of dress—her humble, retired life never allowed her to make much show —but careful of her appearance, wishing by a sort of atavism inherited from her pretty ancestress to appear charming and dressed with pleasing simplicity. This is one of the most exquisite, most French, and most uncommon things in the world. English and German women are naturally charming during their youth, but when

once that youth is past, they frequently become indifferent to their appearance. French, Italian, and even Spanish, women seldom give up trying to be pleasing to those they love. It seems that it affords them more pleasure to hear themselves called pretty when they are no longer very young —than when they are in all their dazzling beauty of twenty summers. That is why the Latin woman remains charming so long.

The episode of the three summer bodices mentioned in the following letter dated from Rome, together with Gambetta's charming *mot*, will explain what we mean.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"The heat is burning. And, as I am as unlucky in little things as in great ones, I have three summer bodices with me and not one of them will fit. The poor great friend used to say, when I told him my little dress troubles: 'that he kept his emotions for more national catastrophes.'"

There is much good-natured wit in this remark.

Religious ceremonies, and the contemplation of nature, of which she never tires, are her only diversions.

"The other day I assisted at the beautiful ceremony of opening the Holy Door; I was placed right in front of the door and of the

Throne of the Holy Father, who has aged very much, but is in very good health.

"I am just now in Naples, where the weather is absolutely wonderful; but I am going back to Rome and to the same Hôtel du Quirinal which I was obliged to leave for a few days because my room was quite close to a theatre where this year by chance—always my evil star!—they are giving opera performances every night. You can imagine what sort of nights I passed!

"I embrace you, dear friend, seated in front of a splendid sea and the island of Capri all enveloped in blue mists; and I send you all my best wishes for a happy new year."

And farther on, dated from Geneva:

"I have come here to be close to my friend Monsieur P—— and to get some fresh air by the side of this beautiful lake, once the confidant of all my dreams of happiness.

"I shall certainly go to Paris towards the end of September; you will be there, I hope. Shall I stay there or shall I return to the City of Tombs, where one is so ready to die?"

Alas! her visit to Geneva is not a success; and, haunted by a sort of obsession, she returns to Rome, to the City of Tombs, where she would like to die.

What charming, what melancholy letters she writes from her favourite spot so well in harmony with her state of mind!

"Hôtel de Rome.

"DEAR MADAME,

"You are either ill or else you are forgetting me. Either supposition is equally alarming, and I do not wish to decide on either before hearing from you news, which I hope, will be good and affectionate. The sun, which is nowhere so beautiful as in Italy, has followed the rainy days; but if it gladdens the eyes, it cannot drive away the clouds which clothe the disconsolate soul looking for peace to calm its incurable sorrows.

"The Pope is in excellent health.

"I hope soon to be able to read one of your letters; so accept, meanwhile, my most affectionate remembrances."

From Geneva she sends this sad and pitiful letter:

"DEAR MADAME,

"I do not write more often because I do not want to throw black shadows over your rosy-hued family life. What is the good of relating to you the vain regrets for a past I can never recover? I have only just begun to understand that it is our chief duty in this world to seek happiness, and I have madly trifled with mine and with that of others without reckoning with death, of which one seldom thinks in the midst of the tumult of the things of this life.

"In front of me I have one of the most beautiful views in the world, and I am the only person who looks at it!

"I send you a photograph, rather poorly reproduced here, a souvenir of him and of me."

The above-mentioned photograph is a portrait of Gambetta. At the foot, the orator has written in his own handwriting: "To the light of my soul, to the star of my life, to Léonie Léon, Léon Gambetta."

But the years pass and oblivion comes not; the noble woman's health fails, and the gloomy thoughts come back to cloud her whole life. She falls dangerously ill. She exclaims, "At last!"

"DEAR MADAME,

"I have not been out, but I am kept prisoner on my bed of suffering by erysipelas in the head, my servant being I know not where.

"My illness is decreasing, and it is a cruel disappointment to me to think I shall have to take up my daily life again; it would have been so sweet to fall asleep for ever and to rejoin him without whom I am so unhappy!"

Lastly, let us read together, dear reader, this last letter written after many years of separation. It will help us to understand that oblivion and

joy can never again return to the heart which accuses itself of obstinacy and cries out in its cruel sorrow: "Ah! if I could begin my life again, I would make no more mistakes!"

And she thinks of him when she says she would make no more mistakes. She would give him the happiness, the life which, mayhap, she reproaches herself for having deprived him of by refusing the union so ardently desired.

But here is the letter:

"Grand Hôtel de Rome, Corso.

"DEAR FRIEND,

"I often think of you, of Monsieur C—— and of your charming children; but I know you are not fond of writing, and your household duties as mother—perhaps as grandmother—hardly leave you any leisure. I frenziedly visit all the wonders which surround me; and there is certainly not a picture, not a stone which I have not seen. I am present at all the ceremonies at the Vatican on the occasion of Leo XIII.'s jubilee; last Thursday I was even honoured with an invitation to an audience with a group of other French people. The Pope, who speaks our language very well, deigned to address a few exquisitely kind and fatherly words to me. But alas! all this cannot repair the past, cannot fill up the void in my lonely existence; and my tears can never cease to flow for the irreparable

misfortunes, for my obstinacy in adjourning the marriage, an obstinacy for which I cannot to-day account, and for which I weep day and night. How different things would have been, not only for myself but for our poor country to-day struggling to free itself from this odious bondage!" (The love of France, as we see, is still as warm in her heart as when they were together.)

"Did I tell you that I spent the month of November and part of December at Nice, near to the neglected, badly kept tomb?" (Gambetta's grave is indeed in a lamentable condition.)

"But I do not want to overwhelm you, you who are so good and kind, with all the sorrows which oppress me. If Rome interests one, it also keeps one sad and melancholy. Here are only ruins, tombs, bones, relics, memories of the past! Those who triumphed and those who suffered alike are dead: a few inscriptions, a few ashes, that is all that remains of their joys and their griefs! Life is uncertain, and we must be as happy as we can. Ah! if I could begin my life again, this time I would make no more mistakes.

"Excuse, dear Madame, this long confidential letter from a heart which loves you dearly. My affectionate remembrances to your family."

The above letter shows us this noble woman's character in its true light.

It was this character that we wanted to analyse.

If Gambetta really loved her exclusively, it was because she was the very soul of honesty. Never did she dissemble. Religious in the best sense of the word, in her letters and conversation she never uses the holy name, in season and out of season, as so many do in their religious mysticism. She is just a religious woman, making no protestations, deeply and sincerely believing. She does not proselytise. Never has she tried to convert Gambetta to her views as people have wished to insinuate; she fought bravely for her own opinions as Gambetta fought for his positivism.

So their religion and philosophy remained independent, though they continued to love each other passionately. But what we can easily understand in a man is less easy in a woman who, forced by her fate, gravitates morally and physically round the man she loves, especially when that man is powerful and gifted like Gambetta.

I sincerely believe that the superior man is most attracted by the woman who combines an independent mind with an affectionate disposition. The more we progress, the less we want our women to be slaves.

Another characteristic which I want to point out, and which explains Gambetta's great passion,

is that his friend's steadfast soul possessed all the delicacy, and I was going to say, all the weakness, natural to woman.

It is indeed an enviable thing to be a refined, gracious, fascinating woman; and when at the same time she is clever and spirited, she is doubly fascinating!

If to all these charms we add that bewitching quality called "keen intelligence," woman's quick comprehension, a sort of instinct of moral danger which makes her such a sure counsellor, sometimes almost disconcerting in her foresight and exactitude—then the man, and above all the politician surrounded by snares, obstacles, endless insincerity, has terrible need of an enchantress whose shrewd and intelligent mind can work for him and him alone.

And lastly I must mention a point in masculine psychology which appears very strange to me. Gambetta's friend was particularly reserved in her manner to strangers. The few persons, not friends, but only guests, who met her, declare her manner to have been extremely frigid and, though absolutely correct, very embarrassing.

What I am going to say may serve as an example to many intelligent women. As the lover loves to possess exclusively the object of his affections, so he values highly—sometimes almost unconsciously—the complete possession of the mind; and does he not really possess it

when he sees it expand and bask under the influence of his love, only when alone with him and for him alone?

When a woman bestows her friendship indiscriminately and wastes her time in exaggerated familiarities, does she not rather demean herself by so doing?

Gambetta knew that she was exclusively his in the full sense of the term, and it was this fact which drew him so closely to her. So to be clever and straightforward, to be a charming woman, intelligent and devoted to one exclusive affection, is the way to preserve and strengthen love. And these two hearts, now associated in the eyes of the whole world, had discovered this. They discovered this, and remorseless death destroyed all their happiness.

He being dead, in the survivor's heart (as we see by her last painful letter) one feeling alone remains: remorse. Not remorse for her past fault, absolved, purified by the flames of a great love, not remorse for not having enjoyed a passing happiness, no! but womanly, motherly remorse for not having given the poor dead man enough happiness, enough affection during his lifetime.

"I weep over my obstinacy in adjourning the marriage, an obstinacy for which I cannot to-day account, and for which I weep day and night. Ah! if I could begin my life again, I would make no more mistakes."

In this cry of pain something still more mysterious replies to the questions we ask ourselves, was not this superior woman obeying some order when she sought to bring Gambetta to accept a religious marriage, thus publicly to abjure his positivism and in so doing atone for his speech at Romans: "Clericalism is the enemy."

Well! she understood at last, but too late, that nothing can come between the deep, immortal, exclusive love of two human beings. She at last understood that religious rites, ceremonies, and opinions as taught to us, are as naught in the presence of cruel death and its irreparable separation. Too late she understood, after that terrible lesson, the disappearance of the beloved, that one must sacrifice everything—wealth, ambition, opinions—to the life of the chosen one, since with him everything disappears, everything dies.

That is what she means when she says: "I cannot to-day account for my obstinacy in adjourning this marriage."

Yes, her error, the error she so cruelly expiated, was to think that there is only one love, the love blessed by God. But when love is sincere, elevated, profound, there is no need to invoke God's presence—He is always present.

FLOWERS FOR HER GRAVE

XXI

FLOWERS FOR HER GRAVE

UNTIL now I have refrained from mentioning the name of her whom I hoped to idealise without being obliged to pronounce her name, only showing the exquisite woman, the companion and chosen friend of Gambetta's heart.

The press has spoken too publicly of Mademoiselle Léonie Léon for me to refrain any longer from pronouncing her name—I do so now in obedience to a feeling which one should always respect whenever one mentions a woman's love.

The poor creature whose sorrows and remorse I have just recounted, lives, as her own letters prove, in retirement and keeps obstinately silent. Her friends C—— and Monsieur P—— hardly ever hear from her.

Her one happiness is to listen every year to the echoes from the fête at Les Jardies, which prove to her that the memory of the great man who was such a tender friend and the veneration (one might almost say) for him are still living.

In the beginning of the year 1906 there was a recrudescence of this patriotic veneration, and the ceremony at Les Jardies together with the banquet and Joseph Reinach's marvellous speech, seemed to breathe a cooling air on her ever-open wound.

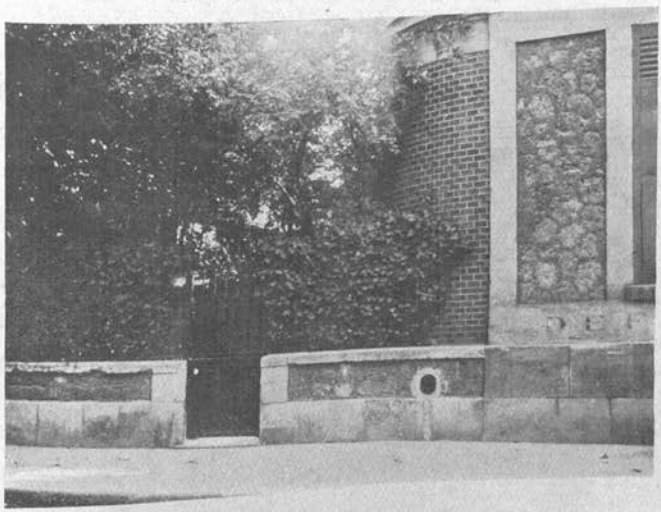
But death, so long desired, is coming at last. She lives in the Avenue Perrichont in a little house whose windows have been closed for many long years. She passes her time reading, dreaming, writing to her few friends. And the letters get fewer and fewer and she ceases to read so industriously; the book is laid aside whilst the light still burns.

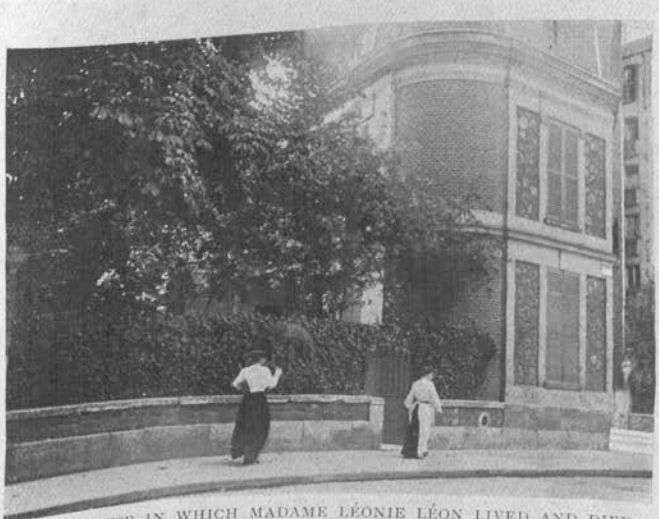
What is the good of reading? What is the good of always thinking of the cruel, painful past?

When the heart ceases to look forward to the future, it is already dead. For a long time now the unfortunate woman has ceased to exist.

So when the disease appears which is to kill her, as she knows it must do, she welcomes it with a sigh of relief.

At the wish of her servant she consents, however, to go into a private hospital, where she undergoes an operation in the breast; but the delicate creature, for the meagre sum she can afford to pay, is treated there, as she herself says, "like a sailor," and so she resolves to come back to die in her room at Auteuil, in the midst of her





THE HOUSE IN WHICH MADAME LÉONIE LÉON LIVED AND DIED

memories and a few flowers. She no longer hopes, she is waiting for no one, she knows that she will die alone; the woman who devotedly nurses her, together with a Little Sister of the Poor, her last friend, will receive her last breath.

Where are the feverish, glorious days of the *République Française* when her friend used to come and share with her those great oratorical triumphs acclaimed by all France?

Where are those excursions on the lake of Geneva whose waves lulled their dreams of love; in Germany where he made a long stay which perhaps I shall recount some day?

Where are the preparations for the long-desired marriage in the cottage Les Jardies?

Les Jardies, alas! death, cruel death, and those twenty years of life without him!

The death so earnestly desired comes with slow steps.

Doctor Lannelongue, who tended Gambetta and who is still her faithful friend, is present.

Monsieur P—— arrives almost too late; and one night—at midnight, as *he* did—she breathes gently, almost gladly, her last sigh.

And this is her first joy since the death of him who called her his inspirer.

She had arranged everything, the rough coffin of tarred fir, the humblest class of funeral, no flowers; she wishes to leave this world as a

nameless person, as some one forgotten by everything and every one. Her only thought is to join him once more.

And in the morning, behind this miserable bier, two Sisters of the Poor, the devoted servant, a neighbour, Monsieur P——, and Gambetta's nephew slowly follow the flowerless funeral car along the streets of Auteuil. The church mumbles a careless mass for the repose of a soul which had always believed in the Catholic faith; the procession disperses; the grave-digger finishes his work, and a tiny cross alone marks the spot—soon to disappear for ever—where reposes the woman to whom the greatest statesman of the time, France's greatest patriot, said—

"To the light of my soul,
To the star of my life,
To Léonie Léon,
Sempre! sempre."

He will soon be transferred to the Pantheon, she, perhaps, to the charnel-house.

But no! now that we know the deep ideal love which united these two noble hearts (which I have had the great honour to reveal for the first time), let me hope, dear readers, that together we shall find some poetical way to make amends and to honour the memory of her who suffered so much.

Shall we, every year when the nation carries its tribute of admiration and veneration to

Flowers for her Grave

Gambetta, shall we, young and old, known and unknown, the simple lovers of an ideal, carry some flowers to place on the neglected grave of his affectionate and noble friend ?

I know not if your hearts, which have throbbed with mine while reading these lines, will feel as mine does ; but it seems to me that our dear Gambetta would be grateful for this thought of uniting in one homage his name and the name of the inspirer as he has revealed her to us. Who knows if, by so doing, we may not pay a debt of national gratitude ?

France certainly owes something to her who always advised Gambetta to pacificatory measures and the uniting of all Frenchmen in devotion to their country.

At all events, we will pay tribute to the infinite love which both she and Gambetta consecrated to the growth and the lasting glorification of France.

EPILOGUE
GAMBETTA IN THE PANTHEON

EPILOGUE

GAMBETTA IN THE PANTHEON

IT is with deep emotion that, after having written the above lines, I am enabled to remove the obstacles which hitherto have prevented the government and Gambetta's friends from, immediately after his death, realising their wishes and carrying the remains of the great patriot to the Pantheon.

One man arose and exclaimed, almost threateningly, "No!" This was Gambetta's father.

I here reproduce the written consent of the old man who has reflected, weighed his words, and specified the conditions to be fulfilled before the Temple of Glory can shelter the remains of one of the greatest Frenchmen. Why did Gambetta's father so violently oppose the nation's wishes? The reason is complicated and somewhat difficult to understand.

Let us try to do so, however.

Gambetta's father was Italian by birth and by sympathy. He was born in the county of

Nice, one of the advance posts of Italy beyond the Alps.

If to-day some one were to ask an old inhabitant of annexed Lorraine, still faithful to France, to allow his beloved son to be buried in Prussia, he would absolutely refuse, and would bring his child back to the country which once belonged to France.

A similar feeling, but evidently less intense (for Italy has always been France's sister), must have stirred Gambetta's father. Italy was his true native land, though fate had endowed him with two.

And his son had the same love for that land of which he says in one of his letters published in this book: "I breathe more freely here than elsewhere, and I feel myself quite at home; its history comes back to me like a tradition of my own family."

Evidently Gambetta's father felt that his son could not reproach him for laying him to rest in Nice, France's youngest possession, still perhaps slightly Italian.

And another very human sentiment guided him. He could not help feeling a legitimate pride when he beheld his family name rendered so illustrious by his son.

So, to rest by his side, after his death, in the same vault, thus to pass to posterity by the great man's side—who can blame such a wish in a

simple soul, so essentially of the people as was Gambetta's father?

When his wish had been gratified, when his son rested close to him in Nice, he began to wonder if he had acted wisely.

The years passed by and the veneration for Gambetta increased. Every year the commemorative ceremony at Les Jardies grew more touching, more popular.

It seems as if the French nation, moved by a feeling of delicacy, in rendering ever more affectionate homage to him who had reanimated his dejected country, wished to make him forget beyond the tomb the bitter cup held to his lips until the day of his death by jealous politicians.

One could almost say that, as time passed, the more the great patriot enters into history and becomes an integral part of old France, the more this old France demands to have him back in Paris where its heart still beats.

It is not impossible that the veneration—the word is not too strong—with which Gambetta's friends, the youth of France and the whole nation have treated his memory, may have made the obstinate father understand that his son could no longer remain in the cemetery at Nice, and that having kept his ashes near him until his own death, they ought at last to be given back to the country at large.

Six years after the terribly sudden death

at Les Jardies, Gambetta's father, while still weakened by a severe illness, having lost his dear wife, writes to one of his best friends the following letter, in which he expresses his last wishes and the two essential conditions (to-day fulfilled) made by him before he allows his son's remains to be transferred to the Pantheon.

The friend to whom he writes is M. David, formerly mayor of Valence, the inseparable companion of the good Madier de Montjau.

This letter, a veritable last will and testament, has been communicated to us by M. David's son, and the original is placed at the disposal of the government and Gambetta's faithful admirers.

"My Very Dear Friend David,

"You may tell your friends that after my death they can take my son's remains and put them in the Pantheon, but on one condition, hitherto refused to us, to my daughter and myself. This condition is that her sons may add the name of Gambetta, to the name they already bear. I am to-day the last of the Gambetta family, and I ask that this absolutely unspotted name may be given to my grandsons. If this condition is fulfilled, they may have my poor son's remains.

"I embrace you as I love you.

"Gambetta Père."

The two conditions made by Gambetta's

father for the transfer of the great patriot's remains to the Pantheon to-day have been fulfilled. He desired that his son might rest near him in Nice during his own lifetime, and he only consented to be separated from him after his death. And that event has taken place.

Secondly, the sons of Madame Léris, his daughter, now bear the great man's name. Jouinot-Gambetta is one of the most brilliant officers in our army. Madame Léris-Gambetta is highly respected.

So the country's wish can now be granted.

We take the initiative of proposing to transfer Gambetta's remains at last to the Pantheon, and we shall be very grateful to our readers if they will suggest how we ought to take the matter in hand.

Ought we to apply to the Chambers?

Ought we to address the President of the Republic, M. Fallières, who next year is going to inaugurate in Nice the great monument to Gambetta, and who might then bring back to Paris the remains of the compatriot he knew and loved?

Must we ask the French nation to express its sincere desire in a gigantic petition?

Is not the influence of the "Society of the Friends of Gambetta" strong enough to make this project succeed? We will not say, for the

matter is too important for one single will to have any influence.

Let public opinion decide.

As for ourselves, happy in being able here to reproduce the consent of Gambetta's father, it seems to us that France will give the world a beautiful example of patriotic gratitude when it lovingly, solemnly, without any useless blare of trumpets, carries to the Pantheon—thirty-seven years after the war of 1870—the remains of him who was the soul of the National Defence and the saviour of his country's honour.

NOTICE

Those who possess old letters, documents, correspondence, MSS., scraps of autobiography, and also miniatures and portraits, relating to persons and matters historical, literary, political and social, should communicate with Mr. John Lane, The Bodley Head, Vigo Street, London, W., who will at all times be pleased to give his advice and assistance, either as to their preservation or publication.

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